



The Official Publication of the Montour Trail Council

MONTOUR TRAIL-LETTER

The 2017 Pennsylvania Trail of the Year

Volume 29 Issue 2

March-April 2018

Winter Trail Damage by Peter Merther

This has not been a kind winter for the trail. Due to the heavy rains in November, December and February, there has been at least two serious washouts in the Airport Area. One of these is at the lower Cliff Mine Road gate (MP 5.9), and the other is upstream of the Enlow Tunnel (MP 7.3). Also on the trail, there were numerous downed trees that had to be removed. There are other areas where washouts have occurred, but the trail is passable. There is also a stream bank erosion issue in the South Park Area.

The trail erosions at Cliff Mine and Enlow should be repaired before the newsletter is mailed. The stream bank erosion will need to have some engineering and permit requests.



Washout west of Enlow Tunnel. Fixed by first day of spring.

Tree Removal on the Trail by David Oyler

Insect damage, disease and an incredibly wet winter have devastated the trees along the Montour Trail of late and it seems as if there are almost daily Facebook posts reporting trees down on the trail. This writer can't speak for the entire Montour Trail, but I can speak with

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authority about the number of trees which have needed to be cleared this winter in the South Hills Friends portion of the trail, or which have been preemptively taken down before they could become hazards.

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Visit the Montour Trail Web Site at:
www.montourtrail.org
To converse go to:
<https://www.facebook.com/groups/43518292159>

or

<http://groups.yahoo.com/neo/groups/Montour-Trail/info>

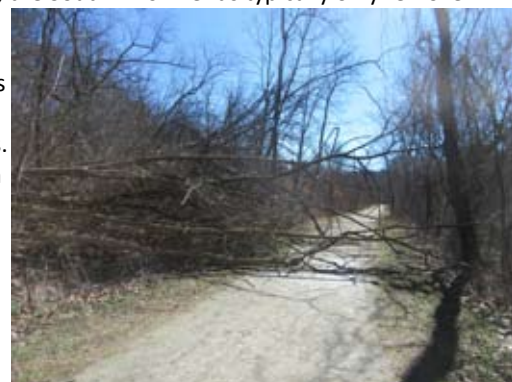


Two sycamores cut down near the Stewart Road trailhead, 3/2/18.

year, although some years are more "typical" than others. Some trail users may remember the winter of 2010 when heavy February snows brought down dozens of trees and clearing the trail took many hours of work by teams of chainsaw wielding volunteers.

With 2010 in mind, the South Hills Friends were prepared in 2018 to remove trees before they could block the trail or become hazardous. The section of trail between Stewart Road (MP36.7) and Brownsville Road Extension (MP37.5) was identified as having the greatest concentration of potentially hazardous trees. **Continues on page 5.**

The South Hills Friends of the Montour Trail maintain the trail between MP35.3 (Library) and the end of the trail at MP46.6 in Clairton. About 5.1 of those miles are on road, so the Friends actually only need to patrol and clear about 6.2 miles of trail. Since the beginning of 2018, the Friends have cleared 4 downed trees from the trail and taken down an additional 25 leaning or partly down trees which posed a potential hazard to trail users. An additional 10 trees, mostly leaning, were removed in December 2017. To put that in perspective, the South Hills Friends typically only remove about 10 downed or leaning trees in a typical



Several large trees & bushes down near MP37.8, 3/3/18. The trail was cleared shortly after the photo was taken.



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The Prez Sez

Hello Montour Trail Council members, friends and supporters of the Montour Trail. We are very appreciative of your support of the Montour Trail. We hope your enjoyment of the trail equates to our enjoyment of building and maintaining this 47-mile community treasure.

I am happy that the board of directors has given me the opportunity to serve as your twelfth (12) president in the MTC's 29th year of existence. We anticipate an exciting 2018 Montour Trail year.

We thank Ned Williams for his excellent leadership as our president over the last three years. Ned now has agreed to serve as our vice president this year. We also thank Phyllis McChesney who has superbly served as our secretary for nine years and has agreed to serve as our secretary for this her 10th year. Finally, we thank Denis Kane who served as our treasurer last year. We welcome Braden Ditch who is serving as our new treasurer this year.

In November of 1989, I was very fortunate that my future mentor Larry Ridenour from Allegheny County Planning invited me to get involved with the Montour Trail. In June of 1990, the Montour Trail Council published the comprehensive 68-page concept plan for the Montour Trail. On page 35 of that concept plan under trail development was this sentence: "The Montour Trail Council estimates that it will take from three to five years to complete construction of the trail."

None of us 1989 participants ever envisioned that in our 29th year of existence that we would still be planning the Montour Trail's construction completion. Also, none of us could realize the expense and complexity of the construction process. In 2018, we have four major trail gaps to construct. Three of these are in South Park Township and one is in Coraopolis. We hope that the Coraopolis construction and one of the South Park gaps will be under construction early this year. The two other South Park gaps may get started in 2019, our 30th year.

One of those participants from 1989 was Tim Killmeyer. You may have read in the last newsletter issue that Tim has decided to retire from his Montour Trail volunteer activities after 28 years. We will miss Tim at the board level and will especially miss him in our local Airport Friends group. As the article mentioned, Tim lead the construction efforts in Moon & Robinson Townships. I will never forget the drive-through 1993 meeting Tim set up with the Moon & Robinson Township Public Works directors and myself to review the overgrown rutted route of the future trail. At one point a vehicle was driven across a 90-foot long bridge's "I" beams as it had no deck. Moon & Robinson Township Public Works employees actually built the trail for the MTC in their respective townships.

As Tim said in his article "I have never worked with a group that was so focused on working toward a single goal". Well that focus still exists today as we work to finish the last four trail gaps. Tim, thanks for your efforts through the years and good luck in the future.

Dennis Pfeiffer

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 the Montour Trail Office for more information or to get on the agenda.

Airport Area Friends: (MP 0 to MP 12.6 and the 6.3 mile

Airport Connector) The Airport Area Friends of the Trail meet every second Wednesday of the month at 7:00 p.m. at the Forest Grove Fire Hall, 2044 Ewings Mill Road, Robinson Township, PA 15108. New volunteers are always welcomed. Contact Phyllis McChesney at 412-264-6303 for more information. Numerous "work parties" are held during the season. Please call 412-262-3748 to lend a hand at the work parties.

Fort Cherry Friends: (MP 12.6 to MP 20.7)

Friends of the Trail meeting: Second Wednesday of the month at 7:00 p.m. at the McDonald Trail Station, 160 S. McDonald Street, McDonald, PA 15057 (adjacent to the Panhandle Trail). Work and cleanup parties will be scheduled as needed. For more information contact Tim Thomassy, 724-926-4617 or Chuck Hughey, 724-926-9436.

Cecil Friends: (MP 20.7 to MP 28.5)

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 (with the exception of November and December) meet at the MTC Offices. Work and cleanup parties are scheduled as needed. Call 412-496-4308 for more information, or email densimwx@comcast.net

Peters Township Friends: (MP 28.5 to 30.4, Library Jct to near MP 35 and part of the Bethel Branch)

Friends of the Trail Meeting, first non-holiday Monday of the month at Peters Township Community Recreation

Center and varying locations during warmer weather at 7:00 p.m. Work and cleanup parties on the first Wednesday and third Saturday of every month at 8:30 a.m. For more information, please call Jim Robbins at 724-941-6132. For monthly meetings contact Mark Imgrund at 724-941-6351 or by e-mail at markimgrund@gmail.com

Bethel Park Friends: (The 2.75 mile Bethel Branch and a short piece of main line trail around MP 35). 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. 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: (MP 35.4 to 46.3)

Meeting second Tuesday of the month at 6:30 p.m. at South Park Township Community Room, located behind the Township Building at 2675 Brownsville Road, South Park, 15129. Work and cleanup parties on the first Saturday of the month. For more information, contact David Oyler at 412-831-9288, davidoyler1950@gmail.com, or Paul McKeown at 412-835-6692, mckeownp@comcast.net

The Montour Railroad Historical Society:

For more information send email to mrhs@montourrr.com.

Westland Friends: (Westland Branch)

Meeting is second Thursday of the month at 11:00 AM at Paneras Restaurant in Bridgeville located on Route 50. Work and cleanup parties meet at the Galati Trailhead on Southview Road and will be announced. For more information contact Doug Ettinger at 412-302-1993 or dougettinger@verizon.net.

National Tunnel 10K, Et Al



The Annual National Tunnel 10K, 5K and 2K Family Fun Walk will take place on Sunday April 22 at Cecil Park. The 5K starts at 9:15 a.m., the 10K and 2K will begin at 10 a.m. All races are out and back courses on the Montour Trail with the 10K going through the historic National Tunnel twice. This event presented by the Tandem Connection is a family friendly experience that boasts the best post-race celebration in the area with a barbeque meal prepared

by the Bike Shop Grille. Stop by Cecil Park on the 22nd and support the Montour Trail.

Registration is available online at <https://runsignup.com/Race/PA/Cecil/NationalTunnel10Kand5Kand2Kfamilyfunwalk>

The J. R. Taylor 5K is for Everyone

A new fitness center advertises its facilities as a "judgment-free zone." We appreciate that attitude, because the Montour Trail offers you a judgment-free 5K race.

The J. R. Taylor 5K race and walk, set for 8:30 a.m. on Saturday, June 2 on the Montour Trail in Bethel Park, doesn't attract many speedsters. Almost all the really fast people are high-school runners who obviously don't look like the rest of us. The great majority of participants are recreational runners just happy to demonstrate that they can complete five kilometers on our beautiful and flat trail.

And if you can't run a 5K, you are welcome to join the 15 to 20 walkers who complete the course at their own pace.

We award Fleet Feet gift certificates to the top three male and female finishers, but we also motivate runners of all ages by granting medals to the top three in each five-year age group. As a result, about one-third of the competitors earn a medal each year.

Until May 13, just \$20 gets you a T-shirt, post-race refreshments, a decent shot at a medal, and a joyful morning of exercise. You'll be hard pressed to find a better deal anywhere. Sign up at runsignup.com or through the Montour Trail website.

There's Treasure in Them Thar Hills!

By Deb Thompson

If you've always longed to find pirate treasure but been thwarted by your lack of proximity to the sea, then geocaching might be for you. Geocaching is a game that combines technology, the outdoors, powers of observation, and treasure hunting into a day of fun for all ages. There are dozens of geocaches accessible from the Montour Trail, and millions available worldwide.

A traditional geocache is a waterproof container (like an ammo box, coffee can, or Tupperware) that contains a few small trinkets and a log book. The cache owner hides it somewhere in the outdoors, and then posts the location and description to the geocaching website (www.geocaching.com). Cache seekers then use a free smartphone app to identify nearby caches. When you find a cache, you can sign the log book and record your find in the app. You can also take one of the trinkets from the box, as long as you leave something behind for the next geocacher. Geocaches may not be buried, but they can still be tricky to find. They may be hung in trees, nestled in hollow logs, tucked among rocks, or tied to poles or fences.



Screenshot of app showing trail near MP 11

To get started, download the app from the App Store (for iPhone) or Google Play (for Android). Just search for Geocaching by Groundspeak Inc. Set up your free membership, then open the map view and pick a cache to look for. Traditional caches are shown by a green icon. Tap the icon and open the description to check the description and difficulty. When you're ready to go, tap the *start* arrow and use the map and compass in the app to take you to your location. Take your time. Standing still for a few minutes will improve the accuracy of the GPS coordinates. Even

then, the coordinates seldom take you to the exact spot. You'll need to search a bit, and that's when it really becomes fun.

Always carry a pen for signing the log book, and a few prizes to swap into the cache. Suitable prizes include key chains, small toys, game pieces, foreign coins, inexpensive jewelry, etc. Watch out for poison ivy, jagged bushes, things you might fall over, and all the other stuff that you might find in the real world.

Some caches may contain "trackable" items. These will be flagged in the app, and the item itself will have a tag with a bar code attached. Trackables require special handling, so don't take one until you've checked the website and found out what to do with them.

For more information, check the geocaching website. You'll learn about other types of caches, such as virtual caches (where you need to observe a feature and answer some questions) and microcaches (which are tiny, and just contain a log book). You'll note that you can pay for a premium membership to get some extra features but the free membership gets you all the access you need.

Note to parents: This is a good way to get the kids outside while letting them think they're just playing a video game. We won't tell!

Riding Across Country and Bicycle Infrastructure Along the Way

Part 1 - Days 1-2 by Dino Angelici

Someday, there may be a network of trails and bikeways that can be followed from the Atlantic to the Pacific, but at this time, it is not so. Our ride utilized a combination of roads and trails. Wherever possible, our route was planned to include any trails or bikeways that would reasonably keep us on our trajectory toward Southern California. This article will discuss some of experiences we had and the bicycle infrastructure we encountered.



Our group, preparing to depart from Lewes Beach - from the left, Ann Nordstrom, Jackie Thobaben, Dino Angelici, Fred Parker, John Filicky, Chuck Ejzak, Kevin Craig, Stan Sattinger.

A couple of years ago, a group of us began a series of rides that will eventually cross the United States. Because most of our group members like being married and have responsibilities that do not allow a 60-90 day disappearing act, we decided to complete this epic journey in segments of 7-10 days in length. If we all live long enough and stay healthy, we hope to see Malibu Beach in a few years.

Our trip began on a beach, in Lewes, Delaware, near Cape Henlopen, the spot where Delaware Bay meets the Atlantic. It was mid-September 2016. There is a trail nearby, the Junction-Breakwater, but since it runs perpendicular to our route we didn't need to use it. We also had 80 miles ahead of us and elected not to take the side trip.

Delaware, however, is a bike-friendly state where one could plan an enjoyable two-wheeled tour. Many of the roads have wide shoulders and are designated bike routes. An enlightened bit of signage on Route 1 indicates that in the far right lanes, only busses, thru taxis, and bicycles are permitted. Bike lanes and Sharrows are present on many roadways. Our first day in Delaware covered 80 miles, most of which were on quiet, lightly traveled, and bike-friendly roads.

From the bridge over the Delaware and Chesapeake Canal, we could see the 9-mile long Michael N. Castle Trail, which runs through a wildlife preserve on the North Shore of the Canal.

We entered Pennsylvania during the afternoon of Day Two. Almost immediately, the flat terrain we had been enjoying turned into hills. Although this was mid-September, the temperatures during the first two days were in the mid-90s and accompanied by high humidity. The combination of heat, humidity, and hills made that afternoon a challenge, to say the least. A few miles from our destination, we enjoyed riding on the Radnor (Township) Multipurpose Trail. The trail was formerly the Philadelphia and Western Railway, which was abandoned in 1956. The township acquired the right-of-way in 1976 but did not begin to develop it until 1995. It seems to be used mostly by walkers and runners but is easily biked. We finished Day 2 in Wayne, Pennsylvania. **To be continued.**

Winter at the National Tunnel by Dennis Sims

For the third consecutive year, the Montour Trail Council installed plywood at each portal of the National Tunnel to inhibit air flow through the tunnel which aids and abets the ice buildup each winter. At each end, there is an alcove with two sets of vinyl plastic strips to allow trail users to transit the tunnel and limit the air flow through the tunnel. Once again it was a success, especially with some of the coldest air we had seen in several years.

From Christmas until January 10, there were 8 nights that the temperature fell to 0° or colder with the coldest morning on January 7 when the mercury went to -10°. The trail has kept a temperature sensor in the center of the tunnel to see how well blockading the portals work. Typically, the temperature inside is between 46° and 48° and ice will not form except where water drips from the vinyl sheets at the portals. On the morning of January 7, the temperature fell to 42°, well above the freezing point.

The only notable event at the tunnel this winter was the skunk who decided to take up residence in the tunnel and had to be forcibly removed. The scent lingered for some time.

Currently, Bill Capp is looking for someone who can build and install doors similar to what they have at the Big Savage Tunnel that can be opened and closed with little work. These doors are planned to have a space that will allow users to transit the tunnel similar to what has been used the past two winters. Once the wood has been removed, from the portals, potential bidders will be taking measurements to come up with a proposal and price.

Volunteers Needed!

The Montour Trail Council needs volunteers willing to take key leadership roles on the Tour the Montour Planning Committee. The Sixteenth Annual Tour the Montour is scheduled for September 22 and is the MTC's largest fundraising event.

The Tour Planning Committee functions as a self-managing team, with each member responsible for specific components of the event. Specific opportunities are:

Marketing & Graphics leader—you'll be responsible for event publicity, making sure that the word is out to all prospective participants using traditional print and social media. Skill in graphic design (or the ability to locate a design volunteer) is a plus, as this role leads the design and production of the Tour the Montour flyer, poster, and participant t-shirt.

Volunteer Coordinator—you'll contact and schedule day-of-event volunteers. We have a long list of individuals and groups who have previously helped make the event a success. Building on that list, you'll be responsible for making sure that all the various jobs are staffed. Without our volunteers, we can't have the event!

Fundraising—you'll join other team leaders to reach out to businesses to sponsor the event. Sponsors make the event possible, and your effort will help maximize the event's success.

The Tour the Montour is a fun event run by a great team! Get involved by calling the Trail office at 412-257-3011.

Update: 2018 Montour Trail User Survey

During January and February a total of 975 trail users completed the on-line 2018 user survey - thank you very much - Detailed data analyses are now underway, led by MTC member volunteer John Dorman and the results will be used to help monitor our progress and plan our next steps.

User demographics this year are similar to those in the 2016 survey, which will enable confident year-over-year comparisons.

Focal topics emerging from this year's survey include trail maintenance, user etiquette, development priorities for trail amenities, and communications.

Results will be published in the next newsletter, and a full report will be available by mid-summer.

Tree Removal in South Hills continues from page 1

So, the Friends January, February and March work parties were all planned around removal of trees in that area. However, the weather refused to cooperate and the work parties ended up doing little of the tree removal. The January work party was cancelled



A group of leaning trees being cut down on 3/2/18.

because of bad weather (cold and wind) and the February and March work parties were only lightly attended. Just two trees were taken down by the February crew of three volunteers and none again by the March work party.

Many of the trees felled over the winter were downed trees cleared of necessity to clear a trail blockage or leaning trees felled one at a time when volunteers had the time to get to them. Trees were cleared or felled on January 23, February 11, 12, 20, 25 and 28 and March 3. These trees were removed from Library to Clairton.

But by far the largest number of trees was removed by a work party of three volunteers, Mark Blum, Rick Blum and Dave Oyler, on March 2. Beginning at the Stewart Road trailhead and continuing on to Brownsville Road Extension, the work party eventually removed about 20 trees. About half of these had earlier been identified as trees to be removed and the rest were targets of opportunity or trees that had to be removed to allow removal of the problem trees.

Tree removal is an important job all along the trail, requiring continuous vigilance and effort, but in the South Hills area at least the MTC is ahead of the job for now.

MONTOUR RAILROAD HISTORY

Scott Mine / Nelson Industrial Park**By Bryan Seip – Montour Railroad Historical Society**

The Scott Farm was located along the Montour Railroad main line at trail mile 4.5, occupying some of the valley and hillside along Montour Run at the current Scott Road and Park Manor Blvd. locations, in the area between the K-Mart and Robinson Town Center.

In 1914 a coal mine was opened on the hillside above the south side of the farm, with a portal entering directly into the coal seam near the current Lowe's store below the Montour Presbyterian Church. It was named the Hammill Mine, operated by the Hammill Company, which was headquartered in Crafton.

Coal was brought out of the mine and sent down the hillside to a loading tippie on a spur curving into the valley from the Montour Railroad main line. The switch into the spur was an eastbound facing switch, meaning that empty cars going into the tippie were shoved ahead of the locomotive, while loaded cars could be pulled out by the locomotive and taken directly toward Montour Junction in Coraopolis.

In 1920, the mine was taken over by the Camden Coal company and renamed Scott Mine. In 1931, operation of Scott Mine was taken over by the Montour Collieries Company. The mine operated for several more years, closing in the mid 1930's.



Looking north from the Parkway West hillside in 1962, Scott farm can be seen across the valley. At the right edge of the photo, coal hoppers sit on Scott Siding at the Scott Road crossing. County of Allegheny photo.

Scott Mine.

Several industries built facilities in the park in the early 1960's, including McKesson-Robson, Richlyn Machinery and Wickes Furniture, all serviced by rail. Boxcars of furniture went to Wickes, a cold storage facility received and shipped refrigerated goods and machinery went to and from Richlyn, adding to the non-coal items shipped by the Montour Railroad.

However, the fortunes of the coal industry and thus the railroad declined through the 1970's and '80's. The last coal shipments from the Westland Mine and the Champion Processing Plant occurred in 1983 and rail service was ended as the final segment of the Montour Railroad was petitioned for abandonment in 1985.

The Montour rails were pulled up in 1986, but the rails leading into the industrial park were owned by Nelson Industries and were left in place. Over the years, they have been pulled up for scrap but several buildings and parking lots still have remnants of rails evident in the pavement and the steel bridge over Montour Run remains as an abandoned piece of the railroad.



In 1964, Richlyn Machinery is under construction in the Nelson Industries park. Surplus flat cars are stored on Scott Siding beside Montour Run Road. This view is looking south from the hillside near the current K-Mart. County of Allegheny photo.

You can contact the Montour Railroad Yahoo group at http://finance.groups.yahoo.com/group/montour_rr/ There are currently 355 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. There is also much information at <http://www.montourrr.com>



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Welcome New Members

The Montour Trail Council welcomes these new members and thanks them for their support. We would also like to thank all our members who have recently renewed their membership and to remind all that a growing membership is one of the criteria foundations look for when we apply for grants.

New Members

William Canan
 Geraldine Farber
 Morrison Fiduciary Advisors, Inc.
 Erica Gamarro
 Thomas & Beth Kearns
 Roger & Sarah Meyer
 Matthew Miceli
 Marti & Bill Parasida
 Nancy Park
 Carl Pfarner
 Thaddeus Popovich
 Rebecca Reitmeyer
 William Sebelles, Jr
 Aaron Smith

Benefactors

John & Kathy Drescher
 Cathy & Jeffrey Finch
 Donna Hoffman & Richard Dum
 Charles & Joan Marsteller

Leaders

Thomas & Beth Kearns
 Thomas Levine
 Dennis Pfeiffer

Meet the Newest Patrols

Mr. Edward Grabski and Mrs. Megan Grabski are long time trail users from Aliquippa. If you are interested in becoming a Trail Patrol, contact Jess Forquer, the MTC Director of Security, at jjforquer@comcast.net



November, 2017 Trail Work

By Dennis Pfeiffer

In the last newsletter there was an article on asphaltting three approaches on the trail to road intersections. Only a photo of the Park Manor Blvd site could fit. Following are photos of the other two sites.

11/2/2017 – West Side Pit Stop Road



11/8/2017 – East side of Hassam Road





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THE MONTOUR TRAIL

Join Us! Become a member of the Montour Trail Council

As an all-volunteer organization that secures no tax-based funding for trail operation and maintenance, we rely on your generosity in supporting the trail. Membership contributions pay for operating and maintenance expenses. Just a small sample:

- Crushed limestone for resurfacing (\$12,000 per mile for materials)
- Other materials for trail maintenance (\$10,000/year)
- Fuel for moving trailers (\$1,600/year)
- Phone-faxes (\$15,000/year)

The physical trail is a reflection of the people who love it, support it and care for it. Joining the Montour Trail Council helps to support a great community resource.

We need you!
JOIN THE MONTOUR TRAIL COUNCIL
(An all-volunteer organization)

Just fill out the form on the other side or join at www.MontourTrail.org

Multiplying your impact by soliciting a matching gift request to your employer. You must designate the Montour Trail Council as United Way Contributor. Choose option 11336.

Montour Trail Council is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization. All donations and contributions are tax-deductible to the extent allowed by law. The Montour Trail Council is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization. All donations and contributions are tax-deductible to the extent allowed by law. The Montour Trail Council is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization. All donations and contributions are tax-deductible to the extent allowed by law.

For more map details, see www.MontourTrail.org