



The Official Publication of the Montour Trail Council

MONTOUR TRAIL-LETTER

Marking 33 Years

Volume 33 Issue 3

May-June 2022

Phyllis McChesney, MTC volunteer for the ages

By Phillip G. Torrez



Since its inception, the Montour Trail Council has been built and nurtured by a steady core of volunteers. They've brought their expertise, ability to learn (and learn quickly), interpersonal skills, creativity, and problem-solving skills to overcome all manner of challenges.

Phyllis McChesney, who died March 23, epitomized these qualities -- and more -- over her two decades of devotion and passion for the Montour Trail. One trail council official described Phyllis' lengthy service as an "enormous gift she gave to the MTC."

Phyllis brought to the MTC a broad experience working for a nonprofit. She wore many hats in service to the trail, which included working as administrative manager in our office in Bridgeville not long after it opened in 2001. She served for several terms as council board member and board secretary as well as president of the MTC's Airport Area Friends group.

"It is important that the contractors be paid promptly," said veteran board member Tom Prezel, the longtime co-chair of the council's Engineering & Construction committee and project manager for several key trail developments. "Phyllis was always very supportive in getting checks prepared and signed quickly to keep things moving. She always seemed to be there to do what we needed."

Phyllis was, for many people, the face of the Montour Trail as she fielded myriad phone calls from trail users, processed memberships and correspondence, coordinated offers of volunteers, and addressed trail issues with officials in various jurisdictions and agencies.

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"She was an amazing, tireless, devoted leader and volunteer," noted Sean Brady, executive director of the Hollow Oak Land Trust in Moon, which has worked with the MTC.

Because she was on the front line of so many Trail/MTC issues, her knowledge was remarkable.

The following thoughts about Phyllis' service to the Montour Trail and MTC were offered by folks who knew her well.

Deb Esia, current president of the Fort Cherry Friends:

I met Phyllis McChesney when I was elected to the MTC board. Although I had volunteered for many years with a local friends group, I soon found out there was a lot more to the MTC organization. I found a great resource in Phyllis who was always willing to take time to explain how all of the committees worked and interacted. When I became MTC treasurer a few years later, she continued to mentor me. We worked seamlessly for several years to keep the finances of the MTC in order.

Phyllis took pride in answering calls that came to the office. She felt it was important that people speak to an actual person. Despite her substantial workload, she spent a generous amount of her time answering questions or directing them to someone who knew the answer.

*In addition to being MTC secretary for many years, Phyllis sat on many MTC committees. Her opinions and suggestions were valued and respected. Phyllis also contributed her time at various events including the IKEA half-marathon, Tour the Montour, and Airport Friends' Penny Days. She was such a vital part of the MTC for many years. **Continues on page 4.***

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



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The Prez Sez Trail Etiquette: It's Really About Trail Safety...

...was the title of a presentation made at last September's PA Greenways & Trails Summit, sponsored by We Conserve PA. The Montour Trail was represented by me, and joining in the presentation were Chris Ziegler of Armstrong Trails and Butler Freeport Community Trail, Kelsey Ripper of Friends of the Waterfront and Three Rivers Heritage Trail, and Doug Reignier of the Great Allegheny Passage. Our goal was to stress the importance of trail etiquette, not just as politeness, but as a serious safety measure. This mixture of participants allowed us to consider measures on rural, suburban, and urban trails.

Trails of all types deal with issues related to trail etiquette, including user complaints, accidents, low-quality user experiences, and neighbor relations. What sorts of things do we hear? Among our presentation team and the summit audience, complaints were remarkably similar. "Cyclists go too fast and don't warn before passing." "Walkers won't keep right and never listen when I warn before passing." "People don't know the rules. We need more signs." Yes, "more signs" is a big one; everybody wants more signs. That is, except for the folks who think we already have too many signs and complain of *sign pollution*, as well as the volunteers who need to mow around them.

In preparing the presentation, we concluded that these issues can be managed by communication, training, and design. Communication is the action of posting the rules and driving them home, and includes signs, website postings, various articles, etc. Training includes more interactive conveying of information, such as workshops, lectures, and direct interaction with trail users. Design is actually building the trail to enforce safe use, such as causing riders to slow down in key locations or allowing space for users to move to the side in areas of congestion.

Some of the key takeaways of the presentation were:

1. The most common factors in safety issues are speed and space, that is, how fast people are moving and how crowded the trail is. Users should recognize the need to slow down when trail use is high.
2. Cyclists who want to go fast would perhaps be happier on the road, so supporting bike-friendly roadways will also improve the trail experience.
3. The Montour Trail's milepost etiquette markers (purchased with the grant from our 2017 DCNR Trail of the Year award) are among our more effective communication devices. These "bite-size" messages are easy to absorb by passers-by.
4. Design of gates and bollards has an important impact on rider speed and safety.
5. Teach children the rules when they are young (before they think they know it all).

All in all, there is no absolute solution to etiquette conflicts. Perhaps the report from our 2021 User Survey says it best: over 90% of users responded that they almost always obey the rules, but they also report that only 35% of other users do so. So, let's all just do our best to be polite and safe, and obey the trail rules.

- Deb Thompson

Scheduled events for this year:

Friday, June 3 at 10:00 a.m. Southpointe Connector Groundbreaking

Saturday, June 4 at 8:30 a.m. The JR Taylor Memorial 5k and Walk

Saturday, June 11 at 10:00 a.m. Founders plaque dedication at Kurnick Plot

Friday, July 28 at 8:30 p.m. Peters Twp. Twilight Trail walk.

Saturday, September 24 at 6:30 a.m. The 2022 Tour the Montour.

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 Mark Modispacher at 412-266-1544 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 6:30 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 22.0 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 Friday 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 Wayne Pfrimmer at 724-747-9766 or by email at waynepfrimmer@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 Caucus Room behind the 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 Bill Capp at 412-833-5928 for location and information.

South Hills Friends: (MP 35.4 to 46.6)

Meeting second Tuesday of the month at 6:30 p.m. at South Park Township Community Room or the Township Library located at the Township Building at 2675 Brownsville Road, South Park, 15129. Work and cleanup parties on the second 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.

The Westland Friends: (MP 21.0 to 21.9, and Westland Branch)

Standard meeting schedule is third Thursday of the month at 1:30 PM at MTC Office in Bridgeville. During Pandemic, meetings have been moved outside to Galatit trailhead pavilion. For more information contact Dave Hajnik at 412-498-3854 (text enabled) or dave@theneonweb.com

Note: Some of these meetings are still being held virtually these days due to the pandemic. Please contact the appropriate individual to verify physical or on-line meeting specifics!

Remember When

30 Years Ago: 1992: Sluciak Construction begins construction of the trail in Cecil Township between Cecil Park and Hendersonville.

25 Years Ago: 1997: A gazebo is donated to the Montour Trail by the Borough of Coraopolis and placed at the lower entrance to Robinson Town Centre.

20 Years Ago: 2002: Construction of the trail from PA Route 50 to McDonald commences.

15 Years Ago: 2007: The "Function at the Junction" is held June 9 to mark the connection of the Montour and Panhandle Trails.

10 Years Ago: 2012: The National Tunnel gets lights.

5 Years Ago: 2017: The Montour Trail Council and PA DCNR celebrate the Trail of the Year Award along with a trail opening and a ground breaking in South Park.

Spring Corporate Volunteers

Twenty volunteers from EQT helped lend a hand on May 4 to the Westland and Fort Cherry Friends cleared brush and ditches. There were 11 volunteers assisting the Cecil Friends weeding gardens and clearing falling brush on April 28. On May 11, Peters Friends Group hosted a work party for 10 Ansys employees at the Brush Run area of our trail. It was a beautiful day and much was accomplished including mulching, shrub trimming and staining of benches and signposts.



From top to bottom: EQT at Galati Road with Westland and Fort Cherry Friends. Equitrans Midstream at Kurnick Plot with Cecil Friends and Ansys with Peters Friends.

Phyllis McChesney Continues From Page One.

Mark Imgrund, longtime board member:

I've known Phyllis since the early 2000's, and can't say enough about her time and commitment given to the Trail over the years, and her willingness to take on so many ongoing tasks and responsibilities that kept the organization running. I got to know her much better during my term as MTC president, which overlapped when she was the Trail Council's secretary. That experience made me appreciate even more her efforts to "keep tabs" on what's happening with the Trail and the MTC, and the extent to which she tried to keep the right people informed so that decisions and progress could be made.

Phyllis' pleasant, helpful personality coupled with her deep knowledge of the MTC made her an ideal "voice of the trail" to users, partners, and trail neighbors over the years.

Karen Robbins, a close friend of Phyllis and former MTC board member:

Phyllis' brother, Charles, initial involvement with the trail led Phyllis to become involved also. She had a truly extraordinary devotion to the trail – often working 30-40 hours a week at the office – traveling from Coraopolis (where she lived) to Bridgeville so many times and never asking for compensation of any kind. It became her family and she knew more about everything trail-related than any other volunteer. If she didn't know something (and that was rare), she knew where to find the answer immediately.

Ned Williams, past-president and veteran board member:

Phyllis spent her life trying to help people: friends, neighbors, parishioners, and those associated with, and served by, a variety of organizations. When she joined the Montour Trail, she did a great deal of work in the Airport area. Wanting to do more, she helped set up our office in Bridgeville, organized everything and kept it all flowing. Phyllis understood Montour's relationships to our host municipalities, elected officials, and other organizations; she seemed to know everybody! In many ways, Phyllis embodied the ideal of a volunteer, taking on additional tasks if it seemed to be needed, and never directing attention to herself. Phyllis stands out as a bright star of deeply committed, selfless volunteer.

The Trail Council has established a memorial fund for Phyllis:
[In Memory of Phyllis McChesney](#)

Membership and Community Outreach

The committee is living up to its name. Jackie Wesche Thobaben and Don Thobaben represented to the Montour Trail at the Pittsburgh Ski Club March Social Gathering on March 24th.

Julian Wolfe and Patricia Friedsam represented the trail at the Pittsburgh Exchange Great Gathering VIII on March 16th at Southpointe.

At the time of this printing the Montour Trail will be represented at the new National Pike Trail opening in Claysville, Pa. on May 14th.

Happy 20th Anniversary Tour The Montour!!!!

The 'Tour the Montour,' the trail's signature fundraiser will be held on September 24, 2022. The Tour is a noncompetitive bicycle ride. Cyclists may bike between 2 and 62 miles. **During the ride, you will encounter the usual rest stops with granola bars, fruit bars, oranges, bananas and yogurt , water and Gatorade. Lunch will, again, be held at the Forest Grove Sportsmen's Club**

There will be some changes for this anniversary ride. The ride will start at Mile 4.5 because of the construction at the "Friends of Pittsburgh Professional Soccer" fields at mile 0. There will be plenty of parking at the "PitStop" (former airport parking) and at "At Home" for this year's event. We will send short distance riders toward Coraopolis or Mile 0 and the longer distance riders will ride toward Valley Brook Road or Mile 31 where they will turn around, heading back to the start/finish. The long distance riders can complete their longer distances by cycling to Mile 0 and back to lunch.



There will be fantastic raffles again this year! These raffle tickets are \$5.00 apiece or 3 for \$10.00 for the following items:

- Aerotech Design Cycling Kit- includes a jersey, bike shorts, gloves, socks and cap (men's or women's)
- Tandem Connection - Giant Escape 3, a hybrid bike fitted for the winner
- U-Haul - 2 bike tray bike rack by Yakima
- Pro Bike and Run - \$500 gift card to be used in their stores

There will also be tickets for great baskets .

New this year, Pedego, in McDonald has donated a \$2495.00 electric bike. This amount can be used to trade to a more expensive bike by paying the difference as well as tax on the difference. These tickets are \$10.00 apiece. **Please review the Montour Trail Council Rules for electric bikes.**

Again, we are fundraising for the maintenance and repair of the Trail! Please help us out ! The baskets, auctions and raffles have great items!

Interpretive Signs Installed by Gold Award Candidate

Two new interpretive signs have been installed on the Montour Trail as a Girl Scout Gold Award project. Candidate Srinidhi Rajaganapathy of Troop 53680 in Upper St. Clair created, constructed, and installed one sign at the Hendersonville (Tandem Connection) Trailhead (mile 27.1) highlighting the history of the Montour Railroad and of the Montour Trail. A second sign was placed at the Triphammer Trailhead (mile 38.4) highlighting the Knothole and Gould Mines, which operated in that area.

Srinidhi researched, planned, raised funds, and constructed the signs, with guidance and assistance from the Montour Railroad Historical Society.

MyMTC Is Up and Running!

Montour Trail Council's new membership, donation, and event management system, MyMTC, is up and running. As we previewed in the prior two *Montour Trail-Letters*, MyMTC modernizes and streamlines our processes, increasing accuracy while reducing time demands made on our volunteers.

Some of you have already used MyMTC to create or renew your membership. We hope that an increasing number of transactions will be conducted online as MTC supporters become more familiar with the system. Of course, MTC will continue to offer mail-in membership processing for those who need it.

MyMTC also enables donations, including gifts made in honor or memory of someone. If you've already read the article on page one about dedicated MTC volunteer Phyllis , you know that memorial donations may be made in her name.

We're also using MyMTC to register participants in the *Gateway Engineers 20th Annual Tour the Montour* (see page 5). Because MyMTC is an integrated system, we're able to offer discounted fees for members who register for the Tour online. MyMTC also makes it easy for Tour participants to buy raffle tickets for great prizes when registering.

To use MyMTC to renew your membership, click the QR code. As an alternative, go to the MontourTrail.org website and click the yellow MyMTC box on the homepage. Put in your email address and click Recover Account. You'll receive an email link from MyMTC within two minutes. If you don't receive that reply or if we don't have your current email address in the system, simply add your information as if you're a new member.



The longer volunteers work with MyMTC to add additional functionality, the more clear it is that the new membership, donation, and event management system was the right choice!

Girl and Boy Scouts with an interest in completing any type of award projects along the Montour Trail should contact the Scout Project Coordinator by emailing scouts@montourtrail.org.

Gold Award candidate Srinidhi Rajaganapathy constructed and installed interpretive signs at the Hendersonville and Triphammer Trailheads.



MONTOUR RAILROAD HISTORY

The Montour Mine #10 Complex

By Bryan Seip - Montour Railroad Historical Society

The Montour Mine #10 complex in Library sat along Brownsville Road in the Piney Fork Creek valley, in the area surrounding the current end of the PAT trolley tracks and the Summit Station housing development. The mine was opened in 1918 upon completion of the Montour Railroad branch to serve the loading tipple. The Pittsburgh Coal Company added several facilities to the complex and by 1946 it had become the largest coal mining operation in the United States.

The mine started operation in 1883 in Bruceton and was known as the Lick Run Mine. The Pittsburgh Coal Company bought and consolidated many of the area mines in 1900-1901 and operated Lick Run until the Montour Railroad was constructed into Library. New entrances and a tipple building were built in 1918 and designated as Montour Mine #10 with the Lick Run coal reserves being reassigned to this new mine. The mine used two entrances, one on either side of the Piney Fork valley. One portal was on the north side above Wood Street and the other was on the south side of the valley, entering under Cardox Road. As the coal seam came to the surface on the hillsides and could be directly accessed, no vertical shafts were needed.

A coal cleaning plant was built adjacent to the loading tipple in 1927 to process the mined coal before shipping to customers. This plant was the model for other air pneumatic type cleaning plants across the United States. The dry-cleaning type plant meant that Mine #10 could ship cleaned coal directly to customers instead of sending raw coal to the Champion Cleaning Plant over 25 miles away.

An aerial tramway of Lorry Cars carried slate and impurities from the mine and cleaning plant across Brownsville Road to a slate dump beyond Cardox Road. The dump became a mountain of smoldering waste materials, and fires on the dump site were visible at night.

A brick building holding an electrical sub-station was built in what is now the Port Authority Transit parking lot. It supplied electrical power to the mine and the other facilities in the complex.

Also in the area of the current parking lot, one of the largest coal mining repair facilities in the country was built to serve all Pittsburgh Coal Com

pany mines. Large mining machines, equipment, electric mine motors and rail cars were transported here from other mines to be repaired and serviced. The building also housed business offices for the Coal Company's mining operations.

A small freight house was built along Pleasant Street behind the large repair facility. It was used for delivery of less-than-carload freight to local customers and now houses the South Park Historical Society.



Montour #10 repair shops and office building, circa 1930, was located on the current PAT Park and Ride lot. Photos courtesy South Park Historical Society.

company stores in Pennsylvania, West Virginia, and Ohio. In later years the store was operated by the Champion Coal Company. This building still stands along Brownsville Road and is now known as Champion Plaza.

Due to a declining coal market, Montour #10 was closed in 1957 and sat idle for 13 years. It was reopened in 1970 to recover its high-grade metallurgical coal. In July 1979 the mine went to standby status and miners were laid off. In August the mine was reopened, but this did not work out and the mine was closed for good, and its entrances were sealed in December 1979.

A retired Montour passenger coach was placed at the east end of the Library Viaduct for use by the Montour Railroad agent at Library. Since the agent was not a Coal Company employee, his office was located on railroad property, near the current Schoolhouse Apartments.

In the early years of the mine's operation, two small company stores provided groceries and other necessities to the miners and their families. A store was in each of the housing patches, one above Victory Drive and the other on Downing Street. In 1940, a new Federal Supply Company store celebrated its opening at the corner of Brownsville Road and Pleasant Street. This store had a dining area, gas station, and merchandise, dry goods, grocery, and meat departments. The store basement served as a distribution point for fifty-seven other

You can contact the Montour Railroad Historical Society through Facebook by searching for the Montour Railroad Historical Society. There are currently 425 members from across the country. 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>

I want to support the Montour Trail Council!



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Go to MontourTrail.org/help-us/join
or scan the Q-R code with a smartphone



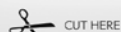
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Bridgeville, PA 15017

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. Not all new members have been entered as of print deadline and will be listed in the next issue of the newsletter.

New Members

Bernadette Albertson Brenkus
Casey Bartkus
Jeffrey Becker
Maureen Bidula
Gregory Boris
Eric Brandenburg
Deb Cavish
Ariel Clatty
Jan & Jeff Clatty
Rebecca Cort
James Cray
Kevin & Terri Cyprowski
Claudia DiBlasi
Kenneth Eckenrode
Michael J Ference
Eric Fiedler
Clarissa Fontanilla
R. Kent Galey
Mike Garrity
Brian Glines
Johan Greefkes
Michelle Greene
Mike Grohal
Charles Gurchak
Travis Hendell
Sean Herbster
John Holl
Keith Hornung
Lori Hunter
Mark Ketterer
Nick Koman
Gina Ligouri
Bill Merchant
Kathy Nimmo
Joseph Perhach
Kenneth Perkins
Ben Rafoth
Jeff Rager
Clayton Schuman
Charles Shobe
Heidi Smith
Stephen Snavely
Cassidy Spade
F. Charles Spence
Amy C. Thompson
Justin Torio
Jill Wiggins
Lauren Worrell
Doug Zalla

Benefactor

Martha Bagdes
Francis Feld
Ted Frick
Donna Hoffman
Jim Homerosky
Mindy Houser
Erik Kratzenberg
Donald Mysliwiec
Rolf Otterness
Matt Simon

Leader's Circle

Ken Eltschlager
Ronald Piroli

In memory of John Bryan by by Mary Jones

In memory of Peter Fedyshin by

Harry Etter
Kline Keppely
Mitchell Klein
Alexis Rittenberger
Charles Wessel

In memory Thomas H. and Margaret V. Higgins

Anonymous

In memory of Ray Johnston

Lauren Homel
Paula Phillis

In memory of Robert Mavrich

Dennis Blake
Mary Lou Mangieri
Michael A. Mesko
John J. Schlesman
Ted Staats

In memory of Phyllis McChesney

David Borrebach
Susan Headley
Mark Imgrund
Peter R. Kohnke
Carolyn Lake
Lance Letterio
Wayne Pfrimmer
Tom Prezel
Phillip & Annemarie Torrez
William Zinn

In memory of William McIntyre

Janet Barone
Jan Fernwalt
Cheryl Morrell
Judith Ann Tapolci

In memory of Doug Milo

Bard Dorsey
Judith Fredericks
Thomas G. Jones
Janet Kaufmann
Lauren Ann Lynd
Walter Tom Parr
Deborah Ann Pattison

In honor of Caron Springer

Virginia Riegner

Administrative Help Wanted!

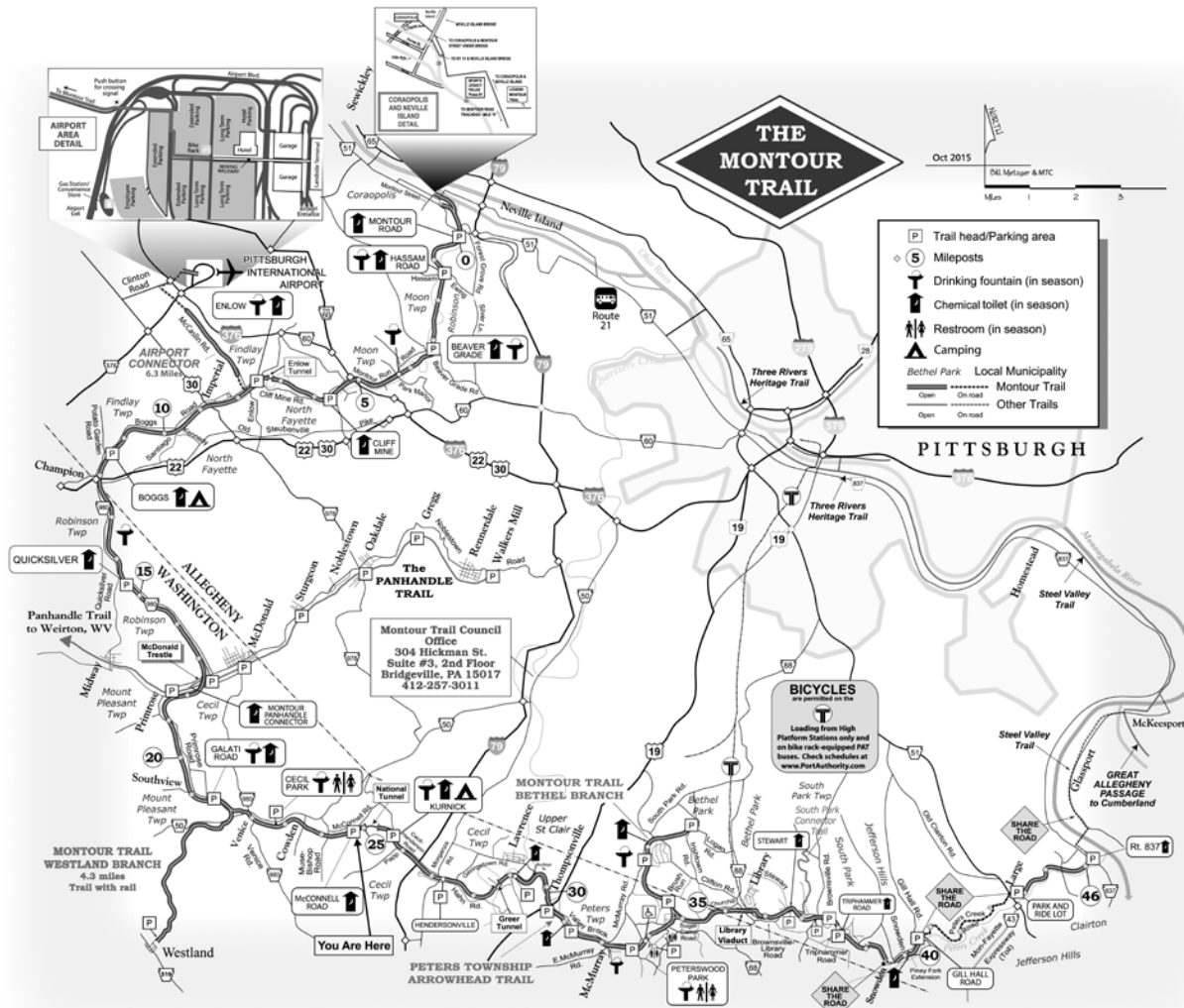
Montour Trail Council is seeking volunteers willing to help provide administrative support services in our Bridgeville office or at home from your computer. You can choose from a variety of tasks that need to be covered, creating a personally fulfilling role. If you're interested, please send an email to Volunteer@MontourTrail.org and we will be in touch.



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