



The Official Publication of the Montour Trail Council

MONTOUR TRAIL-LETTER

Volume 27 Issue 3

May-June 2016

Findlay Township Public Works Trail Resurfacing by Dennis Pfeiffer

We are very happy to report that our great long time (since 1993) trail partner Findlay Township resurfaced the trail from trail mile 7.6 at the McClaren Road trail head to mile 9.1 at North Star Road..

The Montour Trail Council purchased and had delivered 34 tri-axe loads of crushed limestone totaling 755 tons of material for the mile and 1/2. Findlay Township Public Works, under the leadership of Director John O'Neal, performed the work over a period of about seven days in April.

We are very thankful to the Findlay Township Board of Supervisors and township manager Chris Caruso for approving our request to have this section resurfaced. Special thanks to Director John O'Neal and his professional crew who did a terrific job on the resurfacing to a width of 11 feet. .



We are very happy to work together to provide the general public with a world class rail trail. Please enjoy the new surface.

User Survey Results are In

Over 1200 Montour Trail users completed the on-line user survey conducted in February – March. Montour Trail Council member and volunteer John Dorman led the effort, and presented results to the MTC Board at the April meeting.

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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>

Survey participants responded that:

- 90% use the trail for health, exercise or recreational reasons
- Biking is the most common activity, and the most common for those over age 45
- Jogging & running is the most common activity for those 45 and under
- They use the trail one or more times per week for 1 – 4 hours per visit, regardless of age or activity
- They use the Airport area segment most frequently, followed by Cecil and Peters

When asked to rank improvement priorities, more full-year restrooms/ porta-johns and more water fountains received the highest rankings. More seasonal restrooms/ porta-johns and better signage were next in line. Better access to businesses like coffee & sandwich shops and ice cream stands ranked closely behind better signage.

The Montour Trail was rated very highly on maintenance, with 98% rating it Good or Excellent. Safety and security along the trail was rated a bit lower, with only 90% of respondents rating it Excellent or Good.

After the Board reviewed the results, President Ned Williams asked the six trail Friends groups to discuss possible locations more year-round porta-johns. He also asked the Engineering & Construction committee to look into possible locations of additional water fountains. Responding to both of these user requests will take additional funds, and we're planning membership drives this summer (see separate article in this newsletter) to build our membership and funding base. Other improvements, such as increasing the presence of Trail Monitors, were also discussed.

Reflecting on the survey process and results, John Dorman commented "We were very happy with the high interest shown by respondents to the survey. With that level of participation and input, the Board, Friends groups and volunteers will be able to focus their efforts and continue to enhance the trail for all users."



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The Prez Sez: They Spoke, and We Have Heard

My dad once pointed out that if you ask, be prepared, because they'll tell you. Well, they sure did. Our first ever comprehensive user survey opened the pathway for over 1200 trail users to share what they liked, and didn't like, about the Montour Trail. This tremendous outpouring of responses from all over the map is, to say the least, eye-opening.

First of all, we are grateful to everyone who took the time to respond to the survey. Many of you wrote extensive compliments, comments, and detailed descriptions of issues and possible improvements. All of your responses are much appreciated. The survey questions were assembled by a team led by volunteer John Dorman, who also did a fine summary compilation of the results. More details about the survey appear elsewhere in this newsletter.

Many of the respondents have used other trails. Most liked the Montour's extensive completed sections, ease of access, and scenery. Many rated it better than other trails, and considered our crushed limestone surface to be fairly smooth, especially after it firms up in the spring. It's great to see users directly compliment our volunteer maintenance crews for all the work they do. There it is in black and white: Trail work is far from thankless!

Of course there were lots of suggestions for improvements as well. One of the most frequent is for more rest facilities, and for lengthening the season for keeping them in place, or even year-round. Accordingly, I have asked the Friends Groups to recommend locations where year-round portable toilets would be the most effective, and the Board to approve the additional budget for these. Another common request is for more water fountains. In response, your MTC Engineering and Construction Committee is looking into possible locations where trailside fountains could be added.

Survey respondents also suggested better signage along the trail. We have already placed new map, rule, and information signs throughout, in an effort led by past President Dennis Pfeiffer. He has also begun a project to implement a system of directional signage at trailheads and intersections with trail branches, to make destinations clearer. There were also a lot of comments about the MTC website, and improving the information carried there is in the works as well.

As has often been heard before, a big lament is the yet-unfinished sections of trail. That's why finishing the trail is a top priority, and is woven into the very fabric of the MTC. This year we're already into construction in Coraopolis, and in South Park several main line trail completion projects are underway, in different stages. You can read more about these projects elsewhere in this issue.

Many survey respondents made a variety of observations about other trail users. Nearly everyone is out there for their recreation, health and enjoyment, but of course we all do it very differently. What we can do as a trail management organization is to continue to encourage our users to be mindful of others and courteous to them. Courtesy to other users should be as routine as pumping up tires, lacing shoes, or checking a leash. An overall attitude of courtesy and awareness of other trail users will minimize speed and space conflicts. We're all out on the trail to enjoy it!

Finally, I want to thank all of the survey respondents who specifically said that they want to help out with the trail organization, in many different ways, and entered their contact information. We are working on getting back to all of you, and appreciate your patience. We hope that many of you will be entering a fulfilling new phase of your lives as a Montour Trail volunteer, and look forward to meeting you.

The survey has started a whole new era of conversation, one bound to make the trail better for all. We anticipate an ongoing flow of good ideas, and working with the people to carry them out.

Ned Williams

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 Saturday "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 at 7:00 p.m. For more information on work and cleanup parties, please contact Jim Robbins at 724-941-6132, or for monthly meetings, 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 scheduled and advertised as needed. For more information, contact David Oyler at 412-831-9288, davidoyler@verizon.net, or Paul McKeown at 412-835-6692, mckeownp@comcast.net

The Montour Railroad Historical Society:

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

Twilight Trail Walk

On Friday July 29 from 8:30 to 10:30 p.m., The Friends of the Montour Trail in Peters Township will be hosting a Twilight Trail Walk fundraiser along Arrowhead Trail. Once again this year we will have 2 starting locations: The Simple Greek located at 502 Valley Brook Road, and St. Petersburg Center located at 210 Valley Brook Road, McMurray, PA 15317. For a \$7.00 donation, participants can walk along the luminaria-lit trail. Participants will also receive a glow necklace to light their way, and an entry into a raffle for great prizes from local businesses. Participants are encouraged to bring a chair and stay for the refreshments and music. Children under 5 and pets are free. Registration will be at the event only. All proceeds will benefit maintenance and of the Montour Trail in Peters Township. For additional information check the events section at www.montourtrail.org, our Facebook page <https://www.facebook.com/mtcpetersfriends>, email sueheadley@comcast.net or call 412-835-3011

Membership Celebration!

National Trail Day falls on June 4 this year, and the Montour Trail Council is holding a membership celebration!

Friends groups will gather to share stories about the Trail, thank those that are already Montour Trail Council members, and encourage non-members to join.

Groups will be on the trail from 10:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m. and will hand out grilled hot dogs & Gatorade. We'll also have copies of the new trail brochure on hand.

We expect to have groups at a half-dozen trailheads along the trail. Locations that are confirmed as of press time are Kurnick in Cecil Township (MP 25.6), the west end of Valleybrook Bridge #2 in Peters Township (MP 30.4, the Brownsville Extension parking area in South Park Township at trail milepost 37.5 and at the Cliff Mine Road Trailhead.

Plan to stop by and share your Montour Trail experiences!

Note—because rain would dampen the festivities, the rain date is Sunday June 5.

The Bethel Park Friends will also have a membership table at the J. R. Taylor Bridge in Bethel Park prior to the 8:30 a.m. start of the 5k race there on June 4, but the "health fanatics" coordinating the race have barred us from offering hot dogs at that site.

J. R. Taylor 5K: June 4

If you are reading this newsletter before June 4, there is still time to enter the J. R. Taylor Memorial 5K race and 2-mile walk along the Bethel Branch of the trail, starting at 8:30 a.m. at Washington Elementary School, 515 Clifton Road. Thanks to our sponsors; Brentwood Bank, Century Steel Erectors, First Niagara Bank, Fleet Feet, KOB Solutions, and Al's Cafe, and our enthusiastic participants for making the revival of this event possible.

The Coraopolis / Neville Island Main Line Phase #30 Extension Has Commenced By Dennis Pfeiffer



Since the Montour Trail Council was formed in 1989, the plan has always been to start the Montour Trail where the Montour Railroad began in Coraopolis at the Montour Junction.

However, the Montour Trail Council had to patiently wait until a right of way could be secured through the 78-acre Montour Junction property, which was the home of the old Montour Railroad maintenance facilities. We are happy to report that we have an agreement in principal with the Redevelopment Authority of Allegheny County (RAAC), who now owns the property, for a long term trail easement. In addition, an agreement was reached with the RAAC to allow a contractor to start construction of a 190 foot section at Montour Street in Coraopolis.

The Montour Railroad started at the point where it met the main line of the P&LE railroad in Coraopolis. Unfortunately, we cannot start at the same exact point, but have found a 190 feet alternative to get into Coraopolis on RAAC property. This trail alternative plan involved digging a 16-foot wide channel into a steep slope behind properties on 4th Avenue and the main line of the CSX railroad. There eventually will be a 12 feet wide concrete trail base with 4½ feet high concrete walls on either side.

On Friday April 8, the Montour Trail Council gave the notice to proceed to Marrico Construction Company on this unique project to build the first 190 feet of the Coraopolis / Neville Island trail extension. Marrico Construction has made great progress over the last four weeks with the \$249,741 contract.

On April 15 they completed digging the channel to Montour Street, on April 21 they had placed 6 inches of stone for the base, on April 27 the framing was completed, on May 2 the first three sections of rebar were completed, on May 3 concrete was laid on the first three sections, on May 6 rebar was completed on the next three sections and on May 9 concrete was laid on the last three sections for the base. (See photo from the May 9 work.)

Our contract with Marrico is fairly aggressive with a requested completion date of June 30 for this 190 feet section. The rest of the 0.8-mile extension is at ground level on an old Montour Railroad right of way and our hope is to build the rest of the base for the trail with MTC volunteers. Then the asphalt wearing surface will be contracted out.

New Trail Brochure Published



May marks publication of a newly revised trail brochure. Designed to help bring new users to the trail and encourage users to become members, the brochure will be available at trailheads and during membership drives planned on National Trail Day (June 4), and at various times throughout the summer.

We've also arranged with Visit Pittsburgh, which conducts tourism promotion for Allegheny County, and Washington County Tourism Promotion Agency to distribute brochures at visitor information racks around the area.

Jeanine Leech, a trail volunteer and professional graphics designer (doubleplaydesigns.com) created the design. Reflecting on the effort, Jeanine said "As a frequent cyclist on the trail, when asked to help with the brochure I was happy to give back and volunteer my services. I

wanted the new brochure to have a professional, clean, polished and fun appearance that reflected the Montour Trail's purpose and use. Similar to other trail brochures, I selected a sans serif font along with bright, bold colors that are appealing and easy to read. Hopefully, trail patrons will like the brochure and the Montour Trail Council will get more volunteers and contributions with the new brochure."

UPMC Sports Medicine continues as the brochure's sponsor, covering printing and distribution costs. "UPMC Sports Medicine is proud to continue our support of the Montour Trail, said David Tumbas, Manager, Business Development Athletic Training at UPMC Sports Medicine. "This trail-system is a great resource for keeping our community active. We'd like to encourage everyone to explore the trail this summer."

Dave Oyler was the winner of the photo contest held to determine the cover photo. The photo was entitled "Acoustic Motorbike."

Next Month:

Details on the Tour the Montour (September 24) and the Montour 1/2 Marathon and 5K (September 10)

New Interpretive Signs Installed

Two new historical interpretive signs have recently been installed along the trail by the Montour Railroad Historical Society.



A volunteer unveils the interpretive sign at the Dickson Mine site. A Bryan Seip photo.

The first was installed at the site of the Dickson Mine at trail mile 6. Also known as Cliff Mine, in 1879 this was the first coal mine to ship coal on the Montour Railroad. Parking is nearby at the Cliff Mine Road trailhead.

Another sign was recently installed at the new Venice Bridge over Routes 50 & 980. Trail users may remember a sign previously displayed at this location. This new sign is an update to reflect the completion of the new flyover bridge at mile 22. Parking is available at the small lot on Route 980 or at the Galati trailhead about a half-mile away.



Bryan Seip unveils the Venice Bridge sign A Dennis Sims Photo..

MRHS is working on several other signs and displays depicting the history of the Montour Railroad. The next ones are planned for future installation along the Montour Trail at the Westland Trailhead and at Library Junction in Peters Township.

What a fabulous start to Spring!

By Allen Prevendoski

April 16 was the first day of trout season. The Montour Trail was busy with many fishermen starting their journey to a fun filled day of fishing. Fishermen came in all genders and ages. They were also dressed in various attire including vests, waders, shorts and flip flops. The Hassam Road Trailhead in Moon Township is a very popular spot for catching trout as evident from the number of fishermen along the streambank. Minnows, power bait, trout maggots, meal worms and red worms were the baits of choice from those fishermen who would divulge their secret method!

Joggers, walkers, bird watchers, cyclists and dog walkers shared the trail with many new trail users. It's great to see so much activity on the Montour Trail!



Maw, Reese, and Kishaun of, Carnegie, with a 20 inch Rainbow Trout. Photo by Allen Prevendoski

The National Tunnel 5K and 10K Race

The overall top male (top) and female (bottom) of each event at the National Tunnel 5K and 10K (bottom left) and the start of the 10K (bottom right). To get more information go to <http://eliterunnersracing.com/results/> and click on National Tunnel 5K/10K.

5K

10K

Rank	Athlete	Bib	Time	Rank	Athlete	Bib	Time
1	Larry Van Dyke	7869	00:19:13	1	Brad McGourty	8613	00:38:32
2	Justin Naylor	8287	00:19:52	2	Patrick Flahie	8604	00:42:48
3	Kasey Turner	8295	00:20:17	3	Rich Sandala	6463	00:43:30
4	Gary Bennett	7852	00:20:20	4	Gary Bennett	7852	00:44:08
5	Carl Kondrach	8299	00:20:26	5	Carl Kondrach	8299	00:45:03

Rank	Athlete	Bib	Time	Rank	Athlete	Bib	Time
1	Lisa Fleeher	7889	00:20:48	1	Cara De Carlo	8609	00:40:03
2	Sarah Donley	8300	00:22:32	2	Shannon McKenzie	6446	00:44:18
3	Karen Taczak	7886	00:23:06	3	Lisa Fleeher	7889	00:44:38
4	Suzanne Hinkle	7871	00:23:20	4	Lauren Borkovic	8601	00:46:53
5	Susan Beil	6444	00:25:39	5	Richelle Sommerfield	6440	00:47:56



MONTOUR RAILROAD HISTORY

Montour Memories - The Final Run by Tim Sposato

Thirty years ago, the final run on the Montour Railroad was made by ex-employee Tim Sposato, an MRHS member who shares this tale:



Motorcar #1 pauses at Jefferytown (Enlow) Tunnel during the Final Run. Tim Sposato photos.

The year 1986 started out quietly on the Montour. Not much of the track structure remained. Rails had been cut at the west end of Venice Bridge. Rails and ties east to Mifflin Junction and the Library Branch had previously been removed. The main line west to Montour Junction and the Westland Branch were still intact, although rust and weeds had taken control.

I received a phone call from my friend Bob Magdic. He had purchased the Montour Motorcar #1 in 1983, when the railroad had ceased operations. It had been based at the Gilmore Junction track gang tool house. Bob gave me the sad news that a contract had been awarded to dismantle the remainder of the Montour and they had already started removing the yard tracks at Montour Junction.

This news was a great blow to my heart. Knowing full well that there was nothing I could do, my response was subdued. I knew it was coming someday. Bob then suggested, "Why not get #1 out for a final run?" He would "tune her up" if I wanted to join the fun. Of course, I jumped at the suggestion.

On Memorial Day 1986, four of us unloaded #1 onto the Westland Branch at the Route 50 crossing. I stated at the time that this would be the last piece of true Montour equipment to polish, sort of, the rails again ... The Final Run .

#1 had a full fuel tank plus we carried a couple of jerry cans. Our first move was westbound, passing #1's old home in the Gilmore tool house. We decided to make the long run to Montour Junction and, time permitting, do the Westland Branch upon our return.

The trip was fantastic. Riding Montour rails again, for me, was a great thrill, yet sad, knowing this was the last run. We took our time, stopping at numerous locations as I narrated mile by mile of facts, figures and stories of the past. The rails sang an unusual sound because of the heavy rust as we pushed our way through weeds that stood at times three feet high. Occasionally, we had to stop to remove debris or tree branches from the track.

One stop was the Champion Yard Office. I had spent many 1st and 2nd shifts here, and a lot of time standing in the window, watching the rotary dumper and Empty Hill as well as recording car numbers and seeing crews work the yard.

Upon our arrival at North Star, we decided to try to use the Wye track. The boys enjoyed riding through the weeds, barely seeing the rails. It was a cool, shaded location and the day was a warm one.

Pushing on, we paused at Jefferytown (Enlow) Tunnel. Making a couple of passes through the tunnel was another chance to soak up some cooler air.

At Milepost 4 (Trail mile 3) I started to open the throttle more, knowing just around the next two curves, we would hit the long straight stretch that was the unofficial "race track" on the Montour for trains, hi-rail trucks and motor cars. It seemed most, if not all, employees exceeded the speed limit here. Old #1 was really rolling on that stretch.

After a walk around the dismantled yards of Montour Junction and the shop buildings, the run back was mostly nonstop, as we still wanted to see the Westland Branch. As we clickety-clacked over the rail joints, slowly came the realization that this would be my last ride on the Montour. It didn't seem real. Not after spending many years enjoying midnight rides on those wonderful SW9 locomotives and the gentle swaying of those steel cabooses, which were now only a memory.

We soon arrived back at Gilmore and enjoyed a fast trip past Morris Mine, Cowden farm, up over the hill through the cut and then a high speed roll downhill to the Westland Empty Yard switch. We could go no farther, as the rails had been removed from the mine yards and main track.

The trip back to Gilmore was made in short time, the run about over. I mentioned there was a short stretch of track still in place from Gilmore Junction to Venice Bridge, any interest? Unanimously, all agreed "Let's do it". At the Gilmore switch, I used my switch key for the last time and lined our movement. Moments later we stopped short of Venice Bridge, the rails gone ahead of us, a chain link fence protecting the west end of the bridge. I got out and took in the scene, one last picture of Montour equipment on the main line.

We may never know the first Montour employee to ride her rails, but I took great comfort in knowing that I was fortunate to be the last employee to do so, ending the wonderful story of the Montour RR.

This story was edited due to space available. For the full version and more pictures visit montourrr.com.

You can contact the Montour Railroad Yahoo group at http://finance.groups.yahoo.com/group/montour_rr/ There are currently 352 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>

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

Bill & Jackie Bailey
Krissie & Kate Brownlee
Michele Buckholt
Mark Dempster
Robert Filby
Emily Forsmark
Timothy Grant
Sherri Harrison
Dave & Diane Hervol
Ralph Hinkes
Tom Hosey
Stacie Justice
Grace Kramer
Ann Kushner
Beth Ann Lewis
Greg Lintner
Jim Lively
Rachel McAvoy
Shawn McClintock
Rachel & Jim McCune
Richard McIntosh
Kara Mostowy
Frank Noah

Rand Petrow
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Daniel Tolmer
Ron Valdiserri
John F. Williams
Ben & Kate Wilson
William Young
Andres Zapata
Fred Zelt

Benefactors

Roger Hindenlang & Susan Uram

Leaders

Francis Feld
Tom Hosey
Dennis Pfeiffer

In memory of James T. Hosey and James W. Hosey
by Tom Hosey

Current Member count = 1199

Meet our newest Patrol, James J. Cray from Robinson Township, Allegheny County. We need a few good men and women who are interested in becoming Trail Patrols to volunteer. If you are interested, contact Jesse Forquer, Director of Montour Trail Security, at jjforquer@Comcast.net.



I want to help complete the Montour Trail!

I want to join the Montour Trail Council at this level:

■ Student/Senior	\$15
■ Individual	\$25
■ Family	\$35
■ Supporting	\$50
■ Sustaining	\$100
■ Benefactor	\$250
■ Leader's Circle	\$500+

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Don't Forget

The Montour Trail Council may be designated as your United Way Contributor Choice as option #3308.



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