



The Official Publication of the Montour Trail Council

MONTOUR TRAIL-LETTER

The 2017 Pennsylvania Trail of the Year

Volume 28 Issue 5

September-October 2017

Where am I? By Dennis Pfeiffer

I have been at a trail head quite a few times and someone will ask "Where am I?" Am I heading to Coraopolis or Clairton? How many miles is it to the next trail head?

Unlike many linear trails, the 47-mile-long Montour Trail exists as a horseshoe shape through 14 western PA municipalities. This configuration can at times challenge trail users sense of direction.

The Montour Trail Council has a very valuable asset in the Engineering and Construction (E&C) committee. This committee analyzed the trailheads and developed Directional Signs that are currently being installed by MTC volunteers at twenty-four (24) trailheads.

Each sign will have the Trailhead name and mileage. Also on the sign are arrows showing in one direction the mileage to the next trailhead and to the start of the trail in Coraopolis. In the opposite direction arrows show the mileage to the next trailhead and to the end of the trail in Clairton.

The MTC E&C committee hopes the signs will eliminate the trail user question "Where am I"?

We wish to thank the Trail Volunteer Fund and the founders Roy Weil & Mary Shaw for awarding the Montour Trail a grant to establish these Directional Signs.



MTC Board Nominees

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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>

The Montour Trail Council Board of Directors has nominated the following members for election to the Board for the 2018 – 2020 term. Each Montour Trail Council member is entitled to vote for the nominees—see the separate flyer—and results will be tabulated and announced at the annual meeting on November 12.

Dave Borrebach is looking forward to his second three-year term as a MTC Board Member. Dave is the Co-chair of the Membership & Community Outreach Committee, a member of the Operations Committee and Chair of the 2017 Nominating Committee. A retired human resource consultant, Dave lives in Franklin Park with his wife Margaret.

Peter Kohnke is a founding member of the Montour Trail Council and served as President from 2001-2003, He has been president of the Friends of the Montour Trail in Bethel Park since its founding in 1997, and is currently working on acquiring right-of-way to enable the Bethel Branch to extend into other parts of Bethel Park. Peter and his wife Denise live in Bethel Park within sight of the trail.

Mark Modispacher is an avid trail rider and MTC member, and is currently serving as Vice President of the Airport Area Friends group. He devotes many hours each month performing routine trail maintenance items and coordinating special projects involving Boy Scouts, corporate work parties, and individuals.

David Oyler began volunteering with the Montour Trail Council in 2001, and he's served as a Board member for 12 years since 2004. Dave is a founding member of the South Hills Friends and is currently its Secretary/Treasurer. He has been a member of the Engineering & Construction Committee since 2003 and has been the project manager for two completed and two current trail construction projects. Dave and his wife Anne live in South Park Township

Tom Prezel has volunteered with the Montour Trail for over 19 years. For the past 7 years he has been the Co-Chair of the Engineering and Construction Committee, during which he served as the MTC Project Manager for the JR Taylor Memorial Bridge and the Library Viaduct. Tom was previously a Board member for six years and served as the MTC Vice-President for five years. *Continues on page 3*



MONTOUR TRAIL COUNCIL BOARD OF DIRECTORS

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Peter Kohnke	2015-2017
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Patricia Friedsam	2016-2018
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Gil McGurl	2016-2018
Dennis Pfeiffer	2016-2018
Phyllis McChesney	2017-2019
Jen Mosesso	2017-2019
Dave Tetrick	2017-2019
Don Thobaben	2017-2019
Deb Thompson	2017-2019

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All Trail-letter correspondence should be addressed to:

MONTOUR TRAIL-LETTER

Suite 3 2nd Floor

304 Hickman Street

Bridgeville, PA 15017

Or E-mail to:

newsletter@montourtrail.org

All other trail correspondence should be addressed:

MONTOUR TRAIL COUNCIL

Suite #3 2nd Floor

304 Hickman Street

Bridgeville, PA 15017

MONTOUR TRAIL COUNCIL

PHONE NUMBER 412-257-3011

Administrative Manager

Phyllis McChesney

MTCoffice@montourtrail.org

NEWSLETTER EDITORIAL TEAM

Dennis Sims, managing editor

Mark Imgrund

Tim Killmeyer

Dennis Pfeiffer

The Prez Sez

The Montour Trail has really grown up this year. There are more and more people out on it, the trail is more often in the news and the media—especially with our recognition as PA's Trail of the Year--and nearly everyone in the region has at least heard of it, and knows more or less what and where it is. Our trail just feels like it is maturing into a major recreational amenity, taking its place among the top destinations in the Western Pennsylvania area. We are starting to enter the next level of what the Montour Trail will evolve into, over the coming decades. It makes me proud to be associated with the Montour Trail Council (MTC), the all-volunteer group of dedicated volunteers who strive to make sure the trail meets its full potential.

On those occasions when I have had a chance to get out and do a walk or a bicycle ride on the trail, I'm pleasantly surprised by *how many* people are out there. And not just in the traditional spots of concentrated use, but in the more remote, rural sections too. Everywhere, there are parties of bicyclists, groups of runners, local folks out walking their dogs. Kids dance along with their poles and just-caught fish. People are listening to birdsong. There was a guy heading home with a bag of groceries and a gallon of milk. The Trail is really becoming a fixture in the community, an integral part of people's everyday lives.

It's true that we had an unusually rainy summer, so people tended to take advantage of the nicer days. Still, the variety of activities and sheer number of trail users seem to have grown more than such a weather factor would indicate. It has been everything, all in concert – the hard work and friendliness of MTC volunteers, the beauty of the landscapes, the great condition of the trail, the amenities and easy access – that draw people who have never been on the trail before. The wide exposure that we've received as Trail of the Year certainly helped, too. It has put us on the tip of the tongue for many people, even for those beyond the outdoor recreational community. We are delivering on our promise, to a greater extent than ever before.

The frequent summer rains contributed to the trail's growth in the more earthy sense, too. The MTC's stalwart Friends group volunteers managed to keep ahead of endless grass mowing; the stuff just kept growing up, seemingly overnight. This was after, or instead of, cutting their own lawns at home, which as we all know had to be done twice as often as in normal years. This year's storms brought down a great many large branches and whole trees across the trail, to which the volunteers (thank you again!) responded promptly and efficiently, clearing the way for the public's unobstructed and appreciative passage.

Some of the rainstorms were pretty significant, especially the deluge of July 28. This was for some areas the most water we've seen since Ivan in '04, also coincidentally a Friday evening weather event. The creeks came out of their banks in places and damaged the trail; the volunteers fixed a lot of it, but some yet awaits a professional repair, which is being sought. Apart from those efforts, this has been an unusual year in that Montour has had no major trail projects in active construction. Pleasant Street East has been in a contractual delay; Coraopolis is in a design regulatory review, and Piney Fork awaits approvals by DEP, PennDOT, and South Park Township. The MTC's project managers and Engineering & Construction committee are working to enable construction in the 2018 season.

By contrast, the MTC has worked especially hard this year to fill the missing gaps in our organization and operations. We've been spurred by an increasing awareness that, even if the physical trail is continuous, turbulence or gaps *in the way that it is managed* can tarnish the user's experience. All of the more recently formed committees – Real Estate, Membership and Community Outreach, and Operations – have redoubled their efforts to take on tasks that have sorely needed attention for some time. Key volunteers have seen the need, taken the time, and stepped up to address issues head-on. As a result, the Montour Trail Council's real estate portfolio is better managed, membership drives reinvigorated, and lines of communication smoothed. *Continues on Page 5*

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.

Montour Trail Events for 2017

October 14: Peters, Bethel Park and South Hills Penny Day

November 12: The Annual Meeting.

Most of these events will require the assistance of numerous volunteers to successfully execute them. Contact the trail office or the local Friends' group to see how you can volunteer.

Would you rather go green and receive your newsletter by email? Pictures are in color and that may give you some incentive to switch.

Send your name to enews@montourtrail.org to be moved to email delivery.

Help Wanted: Finance Committee.

We have a specific need for someone to take over as Chair of the Finance Committee.

Time commitment is about four hours per month with a heavier commitment during the annual closing and audit.

This person also serves as backup for the Treasurer. As a matter of best practices we like to have (at least) two people with in-depth knowledge of our annual financial cycle. Candidates should have basic "Accounting 101" knowledge and a common sense understanding of internal control procedures and practices.

Interested candidates should send an email to mtcoffice@montourtrail.org and we'll arrange a phone call to discuss further.

MTC Board Nominees continues from page 1

Tom was a Mechanical Engineer and Engineering Manager at the Bettis Atomic Power Laboratory for 39 years prior to retiring in 2006. Tom and his wife Linda live in Bethel Park.

Ned Williams is completing his second 3-year term as MTC President and is active in just about every area of the MTC's activities. Ned has overseen the development of MTC committees as the organization prepares for transition into its fourth decade, and is an active member of the Engineering and Construction, Finance, Membership & Community Outreach, Operations, and Real Estate Committees. Ned is the Director of IT, Quality Assurance and Safety at Washington Tool and Machine Co. He and wife Mary live in Washington, PA.

See the insert and ballot for more information on the annual meeting.

The Hootons at Hendersonville



Thought you might like a photo of Berenice Hooton's work on the garden at MM 27. It demonstrates well how a beautiful thing like that doesn't just appear- it's the product of hard and devoted labor over time, just like the trail itself.

Dan Gigler (MTC member)



New mower says "Volunteer" coming and going. John Hooton proudly points to the front of the John Deere, 22hp, 42" cut mower. It is co-sponsored by Trail Council and Cecil Friends of The Montour Trail. There is a "job box" platform on the rear of the machine. It holds spare gas, hand tools and other "on the go" needs. We're ready for service!

Maintenance costs like mowing are rarely covered by grants, so donations are vital to the cause. Thank you, Donors!

Poopie Bags

Okay, so it's time to take Fido and or Fifi for a walk on their favorite piece of turf – The Montour Trail. You know they will need to leave something behind, so you make sure you bring a poopie bag on your walk. Sure enough, the act is performed, but it is an inconvenience to take it back to a trailhead where there is a place to dispose of it, so you lay it alongside the trail with all intentions to pick it up on the return.



Unfortunately, it gets dark or you are distracted and you leave your poopie bag behind. The volunteer grass cutters are out the next day mowing and the bag and its contents are shredded. The plastic bag can stick to the blades of the mower or are left behind as a pile of confetti. The stinky contents are now harder to see and can be stepped in by trail users making a mess of their footwear. So, PLEASE, make an effort to pack out your bags and place them in the trash receptacles that are at most trailheads.

Bi-Monthly Photo Winner

For her picture of husband Al and their dog Zeus, Margaret Vermeulen is the winner of the latest MTC Bi-Monthly Photo Contest. His tens of thousands of kopecks worth of Montour Trail paraphernalia will be sent shortly. Enter your picture at www.montourtrail.org



Eagle Scout Project Installs Interpretive Signs

By Bryan Seip

Four new interpretive signs have been installed along the trail as an Eagle Scout project by Troop 1005 of Washington, PA. Eagle Candidate Hugh Zimmerman, with help from several of his fellow scouts and coordination by the Montour Railroad Historical Society, completed the project in early September.

The signs present historical facts and pictures of their locations along the trail. One is located at trail mile 5 at the Park West One and Two office complex where Briggs & Turivas, Inc., a railroad repair and scrap yard was previously located. Another is at mile 19 in Peacock Cut, which was originally bored as a tunnel. A third is at the site of Montour Mine #1 in Southview at mile 20.8, and the fourth at mile 25.3 outside the east portal of National Tunnel.



Left to right-Jason Rumbaugh, Hugh Zimmerman and Bobby Stadelman (red shirt). All are members of Troop 1005

MTC Patrol Seeks More Volunteers

by Jesse Forquer

The phot belows shows MTC Patrol volunteers at the Celebration and award of the Pennsylvania DCNR 2017 Trail of the Year and Ribbon Cuttings of: The Library Viaduct and the Trail Extension to Pleasant Street. We are one Trail and our volunteers all work together.

We are looking to expand our Montour Trail Monitor Patrol Volunteer Group. Our Volunteer Patrols provide surveillance of the Trail and are there to assist trail users. Patrols also provide support at Trail fund raising events. We have a very diverse group of volunteers from all walks of life. If you are interested in joining our group contact Jesse Forquer, Director of Trail Security, via email at jjforquer@comcast.net



Left to Right: Jesse Forquer, Jim Cray, Jessie Leschak Jablonski, Robert Filby, Jack Kun

The Prez Sez continues from Page 2

Perhaps the MTC's boldest effort of the year was determining to take an unblinking look at our self, with an eye to improvement. This organizational assessment drew detailed responses and comments from fifty current and former MTC board members, leaders in the Friends groups, and MTC committees. Most of them were happy with their volunteer work with the trail, and in general felt that much good was being done. Management of routine trail operations, finances and leases, and the committees were specifically lauded. There are a great many moving pieces within the overall scope of the Montour Trail Council, and clearly much of it is working pretty well. We have a lot to be proud of in being chosen as PA's Trail of the Year!

Eight broad areas were assessed; these were ranked by the fifty sets of responses, so as to highlight the best opportunities for overall improvement. Four big ones emerged:

- Attracting good new volunteers; getting them to stay, grow, and be effective
- Strengthening the relationships between Friends Groups, and with the Board
- Improving MTC's internal information systems, for better access and sharing
- Bettering the training and development of board and volunteers, to reduce key dependencies

These objectives have come from a broad consensus of those who responded to the assessment. We should all set ourselves to work together to find ways in which we can make progress in these key areas, so that going into the future we can keep the trail strong and vibrant. We're going to need help to achieve our goals. If you've been thinking about volunteering, please reach out!

The summer may have given us a guideline for the trail: if we can keep raining on it just right, it'll stay healthy and growing.

Ned Williams

MONTOUR RAILROAD HISTORY

Montour Mine #1 - Southview**By Bryan Seip - Montour Railroad Historical Society**

Montour Mine #1 was one of three mines opened in 1914 by the Pittsburgh Coal Company along the newly constructed Mifflin Extension of the Montour Railroad. It was located at Southview, near trail mile 20.5.

The other two PCCo mines were Montour #2 at Cowden – trail mile 23 - and Montour #4 at Hills Station – trail mile 30. Several mines owned by other companies were also opened as the railroad was extended from Imperial to Bethel Park and West Mifflin.



Montour Mine #1 at Southview, circa 1927. Gene P. Schaeffer collection.

The Montour #1 complex sat in the now wooded valley along Miller's Run between the town of Southview and the current Wheeling & Lake Erie Railroad tracks. The mine abutted the Primrose and Jumbo Mines to the north.

The railroad spur into the mine was located near the Antil Street-Southview Road intersection at the beginning of the sweeping curve as the trail follows the roadside.

Montour #1 was a typical shaft mine of the time, with 2 shafts dug about 100 feet deep down to the coal seam. One shaft brought men and supplies into the mine and hoisted waste rock and slate out to be piled on the near-by hillside. The other shaft serviced the loading tippel, bringing coal out of the mine to be cleaned and sorted before loading into railroad hopper cars for

shipment. As it sat down in the creek valley, it was one of the shallowest mines in the area. Homes and businesses for the miners were built on the hill to the north side of the creek valley.

The accompanying photo is a view to the northeast circa 1927 showing the mine complex and the town of Southview. The track in the foreground was originally the Wabash-Pittsburgh Terminal Railroad and is currently the Wheeling & Lake Erie. Above those tracks the tracks servicing the mine can be seen, which were operated by the Montour Railroad. The Montour connection is out of the picture to the right and the Montour main line runs behind the hillside at the far edge of the village. The building on the left sits beside the supply shaft and housed offices, storerooms and the miners' bathhouse. The darker building on the right is the loading tippel with the head of the coal shaft sticking up out of its roofline. To the left of the tippel is the power house and a fan house sits beside the supply shaft. The town buildings on the street closest to the mine were company stores, boarding houses and other businesses. Next were single family houses which were used by supervisors and company employees. Further in the background were the miners' houses, which typically were duplex homes housing two families each.

A feature article in "Coal Age" magazine in 1916 stated that the village at Montour #1 was considered to be a first class miners' patch. "The Pittsburgh Coal Company is progressive in its attitude toward its employees, taking reasonable precautions to insure their welfare and contentedness."

A blacksmith shop, ash pit and water tank were constructed to allow the railroad to do basic locomotive maintenance at the mine complex. A retired passenger coach was installed nearby to serve as a ticket office and passenger station.

The coal seam was about 4-1/2 feet thick and production from the mine reached 2,500 tons per day by 1930. The exact date of closing is not known. Coal production is listed in the PA Bureau of Mines report of 1932 but by the late 1930's, aerial photographs show the mine was closed. Although all of the mine buildings were torn down, some foundations still exist, but the valley vegetation has grown to hide all that remains of Montour Mine #1.

Thanks go to Bob Ciminell, who provided additional research on this subject.



Bill Stype acted as the ticket agent at Southview in 1922. He would eventually work his way up to become Superintendent of the railroad. Photo courtesy Karen Robbins.

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>



I want to support the Montour Trail Council!

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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

Jeffrey C. Allison
 Roy A. Alston
 Raymond G. Bauman, Jr.
 Rachel Beam
 Lauren Beno
 David Beringer
 Robert & Patricia Brown
 John Buckwalter
 Jeanette Chelius
 Linda Cobb
 Charley & Kate Colteryahn
 John Randall Damron
 Pappas Deno
 Joseph Duganich
 Robert Fannin & Christine Pinch
 Sue Ferrie
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 Brian Stark
 David Tetrick
 John & Mary Jo Wasco

Leaders

Chad John
 Patrick McCullough
 David Oyler
 Jeffrey Sorbara
 J.A. Wunderlich, III

A New Memorial Bench in Cecil

The family of Vicki Campbell placed a memorial bench and gave a donation to the Montour Trail. The bench was placed at one of Vicki's favorite spots, the west portal of the National Tunnel. She cycled the Cecil Section frequently. She was the brother of Tom "Butch" Kurnick who owned the land where the trail maintenance garage was constructed and a trail head established - the Kurnick Plot.



The Group left to right: Dave Tuchalski, Jennifer Meneskie Tuchalski, Marianne Campbell, Mike Sumner, Cheryl Sumner, Debbie Campbell, Dave Campbell and John Campbell.

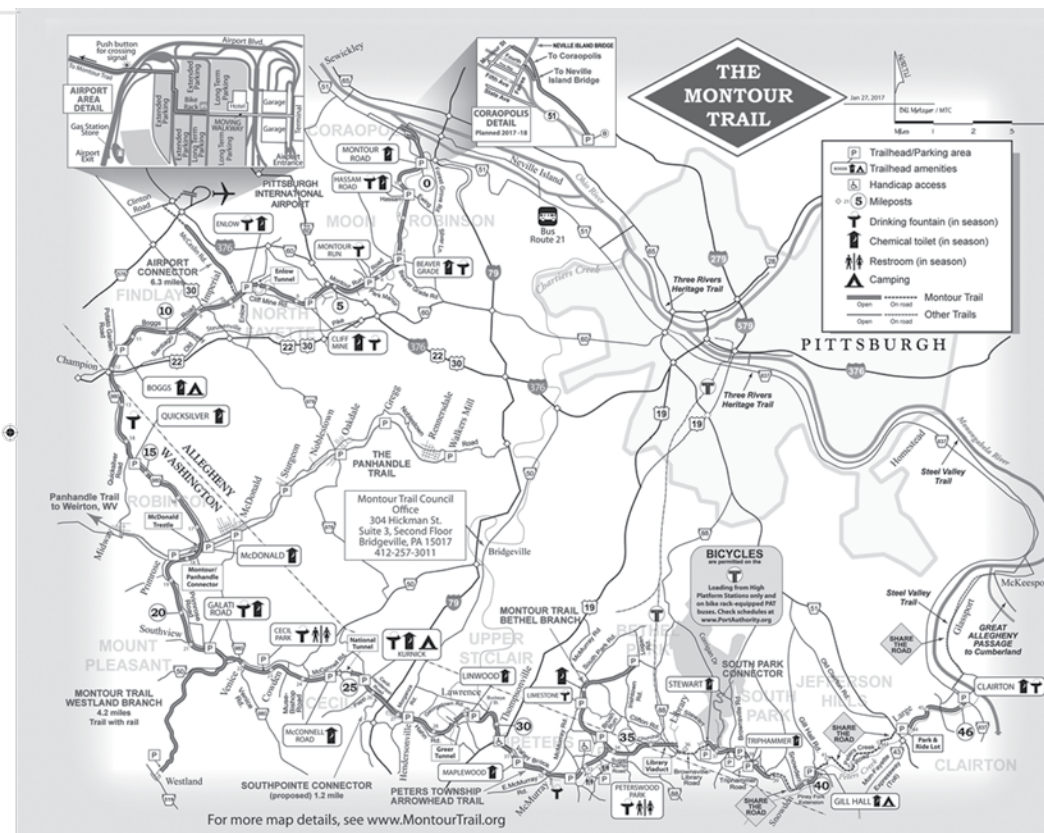


MONTOUR TRAIL COUNCIL

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Join Us! Become a member of the Montour Trail Council

As an all-volunteer organization that receives 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 (\$40,000/year)
- Fuel for mowing tractors (\$1,600/year)
- Porta-johns (\$16,500/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.



Volunteer work party along the Trail

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

Multiply your impact by submitting a matching gift request to your employer. You may designate the Montour Trail Council as United Way Contributor Choice option #3308.

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