



The Official Publication of the Montour Trail Council

# MONTOUR TRAIL-LETTER

*Marking 33 Years*

Volume 34 Issue 2

March-April 2023

## Greer Tunnel Rehabilitation by Nicholas Koman



The tunnel lining system at the East Brady tunnel.

Work to repair the Greer Tunnel will begin June 2023 and extend through the fall season. The Greer Tunnel is located in Peters Township at Mile Post 28.7. Originally built by the Montour Railroad in 1913, the tunnel extended access from North Star to Mifflin Junction. Over the years the concrete ceiling has deteriorated and has required the installation of scaffolding to protect trail users. *See page 4.*

A tunnel lining system will be installed starting at the eastern portal and extend approximately 100' into the tunnel to stabilize the existing concrete structure. The Montour Trail Council worked with an engineering firm to design the lining system of steel framing.

The Montour Trail Council will attempt to minimize disruptions during construction. It is anticipated that the tunnel will be closed Monday-Thursday throughout the summer with limited access through the tunnel Friday – Sunday.

Please visit [www.montourtrail.org](http://www.montourtrail.org) for updates and full closure schedule. Thank you for your patience as we work to maintain and improve the safety of our trail.



The Greer Tunnel temporary safety features.

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

## Spring Cleaning in Cecil



Members of Cecil Friends have been working diligently for the last month taking advantage of the lack of winter weather on a major clean-up project. Standing dead trees near the trail and trees and brush in the ditches have been removed from mp22, Route 980, to roughly mp 27.

Bill Capp's maintenance team started the same project at mp 28.5, Chartiers Creek, working to near mp 28. This area required a tractor and dump truck to clear out years of dead trees.

Two more miles and the 6.5 mile project will be complete.

Thanks to everyone who has helped including Bob

Mihalco, Chuck Wolf, Larry Rowan, Dennis Sims. John Wright and Donna Click.





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#### **THE MONTOUR TRAIL-LETTER**

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## **The Prez Sez: Spring Comes to the Trail**

Happy Springtime to you! The early flowers are blooming, the birds are in song, and the woods are greening up.

Even coming out of the mildest winter in years, this season brings a special joy to us all. It's so nice to get outside and take in the great sweep of the world renewing itself. It's perhaps even more enjoyable, in contrast to the bare branch silence of the many winter walks some of us have taken.

Early times of mild weather have also brought out groups of volunteers, who have gotten a solid start on a spring cleanup of the trail. Thank you all for your good work! The brush clearing and trimming are already making the trail corridor much more attractive and inviting. The stage is being set for many good things to happen along the trail this year, which you'll be reading about in this fine newsletter, and elsewhere.

Once again, I have been asked to serve as MTC president, and will do all I can to serve the organization and lead the trail into a bright future. Fortunately, the MTC enjoys a highly collaborative spirit among its committees, its Friends groups, and its supporters, an important element that helps achieve its goals. One example is the annual Tour the Montour ride, ably led in past years by Patricia Friedsam, but this year being given new life by Annemarie and Phillip Torrez, who in the remainder of this space will offer insights into the Tour. Thanks! – Ned Williams

Having been volunteers at the Tour the Montour rest stops for the past three years, we've seen first-hand the enthusiasm and fun enjoyed by the cyclists that have rolled out for the Montour Trail's annual fundraiser. A couple years ago, we met a 30-something rider at the Cliff Mine rest stop who was excited to be at her first cycling event. "I can't believe I've done this," she gushed.

Last year, there were two gray-haired sisters, one who lives locally and one who's in Ohio, that make it a point to ride the Tour, they told us at the rest stop at the Galati trailhead. "Every year, it's something we look forward to doing," the younger sister noted.

The Tour the Montour has literally come a long way since the inaugural ride in 2003, when a hardy ensemble of 100 riders braved the rain to ride up to 44 miles. Expansion of the Montour made a metric century (62 miles) an option for the first time in 2009. This year's Tour will be Saturday, Sept. 23.

For the third year, Gateway Engineers Inc. is the title sponsor of the Tour. Gateway has worked with the Montour Trail Council as the design firm for several projects including Summit Station, the Pirain property and a sidewalk along Route 51 in Large. We're very appreciative of the firm's support for the Tour, as well as that from other area companies, small businesses and friends of the trail. The 2023 Tour has plenty of room for additional sponsors, please contact the Trail Council at (412) 257-3011 for more information.

Sponsors are vital to the success of the Tour. Our sponsors value the benefits that the Montour Trail contributes to the region's quality of life and the opportunity it offers residents to enjoy a peaceful place to walk the dog, go for a jog, take the kids out for a hike, or safely cycle apart from car traffic – or just be outdoors in a natural setting. Since its beginning, the Montour Trail Council has been led by volunteers who are supported by countless other volunteers in seven Friends groups that act as stewards for different sections of the trail. *continues page 3*

## Friends' Meetings and Work Parties

### MTC Board Meeting:

Every third Monday of the month - 6:00 p.m. at 2589 Boyce Plaza Road, Suite 4 Upper St. Clair. Turn at the traffic signal on Boyce Road between the railroad and the creel 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 6:30 p.m. The meetings are held at the Kurnick Access area along the trail off Cecil Henderson Road. 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, the first non-holiday Monday of each month at 7:00 p.m. at various locations depending on weather and time of year.. Work and clean-up parties on

the first Friday and third Saturday of every month at 8:30 am. For more information on meetings or work parties please email us at [petersfriends@montourtrail.org](mailto:petersfriends@montourtrail.org)

**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](mailto:davidoyler1950@gmail.com), or Paul McKeown at 412-835-6692, [mckeownp@comcast.net](mailto:mckeownp@comcast.net)

### The Montour Railroad Historical Society:

For more information send email to [mrhs@montourrr.com](mailto: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](mailto:dave@theneonweb.com)

## Remember When

**2018: 5 years ago:** Tim Killmeyer, one of the Trail founders, announces: his retirement.

**2013: 10 years ago:** Airport Corridor Transportation Association awards their "Improving Mobility" award to the Montour Trail Council, Moon Township and their engineering firm L. R Kimball for the Park Manor Safety Improvement Project.

**2008: 15 years ago:** Mingo Creek Construction begins construction of Phase 16, Chartiers Creek to Georgetown Road in Peters Township.

**2003: 20 years ago:** Deb Thompson and Dave Hajnik are welcomed onboard as webmasters.

**1998: 25 years ago:** Hollow Oak Land Trust buys another parcel of land in Moon Twp. bringing their land total to nearly 170 acres.

**1993: 30 years ago:** MTC is awarded a \$1.3 million ISTE A grant.

## Prez sez continues from page 2

Sponsorships provide a way for local business to show their commitment to community efforts such as the MontourTrail, get their name in front of hundreds of trail and recreational enthusiasts and promote healthy activities that have far-reaching influence in the well-being of the region. In return, the Tour recognizes sponsors through various event materials such as posters and fliers, the event t-shirt, signage, and online advertising of the event.

Be a sponsor, come out and volunteer on Tour day, or plan to hop on your bicycle: we hope to see you at this year's Gateway Engineers Tour the Montour.



## 10:00 AM on Saturday, April 22



Archangel Gabriel Parish  
and  
Montour Trail Council

All are invited to Mile Zero of the Montour Trail outside of Coraopolis on Rt. 51 (near the Highmark soccer fields) for a blessing of bicycles and their owners.

After the 15 minute blessing cyclists can proceed directly onto the trail for a ride. Park at Mile 0 itself or alternatively park somewhere up the trail and ride to the blessing then ride back to your car.

### Celebrate the New Office

The Montour Trail Council plans to hold an open house at its new office.

Located at 2589 Boyce Plaza Road, Suite 4 in Upper St. Clair Twp., The office is just off Boyce Road between Chartiers Creek and the Pittsburgh and Ohio Central Railroad

Turn left at the traffic signal if coming from Mayview Road or right if coming down the hill from US 19.

The event will take place on Saturday, April 22 between 11:00 a.m. and 3:00 p.m.

### Greer Tunnel Closes Early and Indefinitely

The Greer Tunnel located at mp 28.6 (near Chartiers Creek Bridge) will be closed indefinitely as of March 23. The closure is because of a structural issue that was discovered March 22. The Trail regrets this inconvenience but user safety is our highest priority. Photos by Julian Wolfe and Wayne Pfrimmer.



West portal from Chartiers Creek



East portal from the railroad overpass.

## Volunteer Opportunity: Insurance Review

The volunteer-led Montour Trail Council (MTC) is responsible for building, maintaining, operating and promoting the Montour Trail. We are seeking volunteers with professional skill in risk management and insurance to join our volunteer team.

Currently the MTC participates in insurance programs made available through our membership in the Land Trust Alliance. That said, we are exploring all insurance options.

We are seeking assistance to help us periodically review the scope and adequacy of our coverage.

We expect that most of the effort associated with this role will occur remotely and that the total time commitment will be between 10 – 20 hours per year. If you're interested please contact us at [office@montourtrail.org](mailto:office@montourtrail.org).

## J. R. Taylor 5K Race and Walk Provides a Family Friendly Event

This year's J. R. Taylor 5K Race and Walk will kick off on June 3 at 8:30! The race starts on the trail alongside Washington Elementary School and crosses the JR Taylor Memorial Bridge as part of an out and back route.

Medals will be awarded across age categories for male and female runners and for the top 3 overall male and female finishers. There will also be door prizes, snacks, and drinks. Performance t-shirts will be provided to all participants signing up before May 10.

The event caters to runners and walkers of all ages, as the surface is generally smooth and flat. The Friends of the Montour Trail in Bethel Park, led by President Peter Kohnke, are excited to continue to attract younger participants and families, with cost of only \$10 for kid 12 and under and \$15 for ages 13-17.

Race director Mike McClaine commented "2022 was a great first year back after the pandemic, and we expect the event to continue to grow!" To sign up or donate, go to [www.JRTaylor5K.com](http://www.JRTaylor5K.com) and support the Montour Trail in Bethel Park.

This race is supported by gold sponsors, Aspirant, a management consulting, technology consulting, and recruiting process outsourcing firm, and KOB Solutions, a provider of recruiting solutions for the pharmaceutical and biomedical industries. The event also boasts silver sponsors Affordable Decks, Brentwood Bank, and Colebrook Management (Highfield Crossing Apartments).

## Tour the Montour Gears Up

The 2023 Gateway Engineers Tour the Montour, the 21st annual fundraiser for the Montour Trail, is set for Saturday, Sept. 23.

"We welcome riders of all abilities, especially families and their children, for our celebration of the Montour Trail," says Annemarie Torrez, co-chair of the event. "We know that a lot of folks look forward to the Tour, and we expect another strong turnout from friends of the Montour."

Registration will begin in the summer. Please watch for details in the Trail-Letter and [montourtrail.org](http://montourtrail.org).

Tour participants can select a distance: ride 2 miles; 6 miles; 24 miles; 44 miles; or 62 miles (a metric century). The rides are out-and-back, and the routes include rest stops with snacks and beverages. On-trail rider support will be provided by the Montour Trail Patrol/Trail Ambassadors.

Registration for the Tour the Montour includes lunch, and early registrants will get a colorful event t-shirt. Moreover, the event will have a host of super raffle prizes and basket chance items that can be viewed at the lunch site, which will be the Forest Grove Sportsmen's Club (near mile marker 2).

Raffle prizes will include an electric bicycle (donated by SweetWater Bikes, Ambridge); a hybrid bike (donated by Tandem Connection, Hendersonville); a cycling kit gift certificate (\$250 value, donated by AeroTech Designs, Coraopolis); and a Yakima two-bike tray hitch rack (\$249 value, donated by U-Haul of North Hills). Tickets will be available this summer at various sites along the Montour, and at packet pick-up and on the day of the Tour. They will also be available online at time of registration.

This year will mark the third consecutive year that Gateway Engineers has signed on as the Tour's title sponsor. Gateway, a full-service civil engineering firm with offices in Pittsburgh and Butler, has performed design work for several construction projects on the Montour Trail.

The Pittsburgh Community Broadcasting Corporation (90.5 WESA and 91.3 WYEP) will be the media sponsor for the Tour and help publicize the event on the air and online.

Proceeds from the Tour benefit the Montour Trail Council, which was founded in 1989 and owns the trail. The Montour, honored by the Commonwealth as Trail of the Year in 2017, encompasses more than 60 miles in Allegheny and Washington counties and is the longest suburban rail trail in the nation.

If you are interested in volunteering for the Tour or getting involved with a Tour committee, please call Phillip Torrez

## MONTOUR RAILROAD HISTORY

## The Pittsburgh & Moon Run Railroad

### By Bryan Seip – Montour Railroad Historical Society

The Pittsburgh & Moon Run Railroad was incorporated February 10, 1891, becoming fully operational early in 1893. Built by the Moon Run Coal Company, it ran six miles from Groveton in Coraopolis to its new Moon Run Mine near the current Rt. 60 & I-79 interchange. The right-of-way ran up the Moon Run valley and later was used as part of the I-79 highway route. A few segments of the original right-of-way can be seen along the big “S” curves as I-79 nears the Ohio River.

The P&MR also serviced the Clever Gas Coal Co., and the Relso Coal Co. along its route. Passenger and mail service were established with service from Moon Run to and from Pittsburgh on six trains daily except Sundays. The railroad connected with the Pittsburgh & Lake Erie RR in Coraopolis and acquired trackage rights to travel to the P&LE Station Square depot. This service was a necessity to acquire a state franchise and as an incentive to property owners whose land the railroad needed.

Passenger service ran into the early 1920's, finally ending in 1924. Several of the station stop names along the P&MR were named for the landowners where the stops were located. Some of those names live on, as housing developments used the names for local streets such as Verner, Forest Grove, Diebold, Clever and Aiken Roads.

The Moon Run Mine was a drift mine, meaning its tunnels went directly into the coal seam outcropping on the hillside and no vertical shafts were needed. The Moon Run Mine eventually became a huge complex, extending southward as far as Carnegie and Rennerdale, northwest beneath Settlers Cabin Park and Robinson Town Center and eastward to the bluffs overlooking Chartiers Creek beyond McKees Rocks Road. The mine had three sections, with the main tippie just below Route 60. There was also a tippie on the north side of Route 60 above Chartiers Creek and another tippie on Campbell's Run Road about a half-mile west of the I-79/I-376 interchange. Piles of waste slate and rock can still be seen to the north of Rt. 60 and Moon Run Road.



*A view of the Moon Run Mine complex before 1900, with the passenger station to the left of the tracks and the company store and miners' homes beyond the tippie. Photo courtesy Tony Petrovic – Robinson Township Historical Society.*



*A loaded coal train descending the P&MR, after the 1912 merger with the Montour RR. Photo courtesy Gene P. Schaeffer collection.*

In 1899 the Moon Run Mine and the P&MR RR were purchased by the newly formed Pittsburgh Coal Company, along with the Montour RR and many other coal mines in Western Pennsylvania. The Coal Company operated the railroads as separate subsidiaries, as the P&MR continued to operate using its 2 locomotives and its steel gondolas for coal loading. Those cars were marked with P&MR RR reporting marks. In 1912, the P&MR was merged into the Montour. After the merger, new cars with Montour markings were used on the P&MR. There was no direct connection between the P&MR and Montour. The P&MR connected with the Pittsburgh & Lake Erie Railroad, then about a half-mile away the P&LE made another connection with the

Montour.

Handling coal trains on the P&MR was a challenge for engineers, conductors, and brakemen because the railroad rose 350 feet from the river to the Moon Run Mine, a grade of 70 feet per mile, or about 1.7%, and runaway trains were a constant danger as the loaded coal was taken down the steep grade.

By 1936, the Moon Run Mine was the only customer remaining on the railroad. Then its coal reserves played out and the mine was idled. A petition for abandonment of the railroad was made in 1938 and executed in 1939 and the rails were removed. The right-of-way lay idled for years until the construction of I-79 in the mid-1970's, as the highway followed the old railroad route down the valley to the Neville Island bridge over the Ohio River.

*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!



### Become a member now!

Go to [MontourTrail.org/help-us/join](https://MontourTrail.org/help-us/join)  
or scan the Q-R code with a smartphone



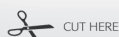
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- ☐ Sustaining.....\$100 - \$249
- ☐ Supporting .....\$50 - \$99
- ☐ Family .....\$35
- ☐ Individual.....\$25
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**2589 Boyce Plaza Rd, Suite 4**  
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Montour Trail Council

## 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

Susan Andrick  
Ernest Babich  
Benjamin Barley  
Michael W. Black  
Matthew Boyles  
Jim Bregenser  
Chris Canning  
Amy Cassano  
Daniel Connell  
Mark Davis  
Carol Dolence  
Kevin Dunay  
Scott Ferguson  
Carl Hellerstedt  
Carla Horcick  
Sara Horsey  
Kirk Howe  
Thomas Johnson  
Michael Jones  
Dayna Jornsay-Hester  
Brian Karlovich  
Michael Kelley  
Mark Klauss  
Michael Kuntz  
Elaine Kurtanich  
Tom Lauwers  
Ben Lerman  
Garvin Livingston  
Leon Locasto  
David Lugar

James Lyons  
Marita Maloney  
William McGahey  
Robert McGuire  
Michael Mikula  
Mary Mullen  
Leif Ocheltree  
Kathy Paenlli  
Henrietta Reiber  
Mary Ellen Rhoa  
Jessica Sahi  
Michael Stroucken  
Mark Swank  
Maureen Swogger  
Linda Szewczyk  
Dave Truhan  
Ming Tung  
Jonathan Turka  
Jon West

### Leader's Circle

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David Oyler  
Ronald Piroli

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Roy and Carolyn Yarrington

### In memory of Edwin Borrebach

Dave Borrebach

### In memory Ed Kuna

Lori Battelli  
William Boyer  
Christine Close  
Joanne Ebeck  
Joann Kjelshus  
Alice Klobcar  
Larrie Mordensky  
Karen Settellaier  
George Vlassich  
Nancy Zeh

