



The Official Publication of the Montour Trail Council

MONTOUR TRAIL-LETTER

Marking 33 Years

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Greer Tunnel Closed Again

The Greer Tunnel was closed again on July 17 for permanent lining repairs to be made. The trail will be closed from the Linwood Parking lot to the Western Portal at the bridge over Chartiers Creek. (see map) Swank Construction was selected through a competitive bid process to perform the work. The tunnel and parking lot will remain closed for approximately 3.5 months.

Trail users may remember the tunnel closing earlier this year for emergency repairs on the eastern portal. Engineer Bill Armstrong with WEC Engineers noticed issues with the portal and recommended the closure until repairs could be made. Volunteers and crew moved quickly to secure the trail and repairs were made to open the trail in time for Memorial Day weekend.

In this phase of construction, Swank will install a concrete foundation to erect prefabricated steel arches. The steel arches will start from the Eastern Portal and continue spaced every 5' for the first 120' into the tunnel. Additional steel sheeting will be installed between the arches and a light weight grout-like material will be pumped in. The grout will stabilize the tunnel walls between the sheeting and existing tunnel face.

The deteriorating of the Greer Tunnel is largely caused by water finding its way into the tunnels cracks and forming holes. Over the last 101 years the ground water has caused spalling mostly during the winter's freeze thaw cycles. To help solve this issue, a drainage system along the new foundation will be installed to carry water out and away from the tunnel. A new portal face will be cast to closely match the existing aesthetic. This will help protect the steel arches and cover the anchors plates installed in the emergency repair.



Southpointe Connector Ribbon Cutting

On Thursday, June 22, the ribbon was officially cut opening the Southpointe Connector from Reserve Drive to the Montour Trail. The approximately 1/3 mile paved trail switchbacks down to the Montour. The ribbon was cut by scissors and bikes. Caution is strongly advised for users that the trail is steep and the switchback curves are sharp. A stop sign is at the junction of the Montour Trail. The trail will be extended to Klinger Road and then to Southpointe Boulevard.

The pictures below (by Dennis Sims) shows trail security Kevin McGoun and Tour the Montour Co-director Phillip Torrez riding their bikes to "cut" the ribbon while Washington County Commissioner Larry Maggi, Cecil Twp supervisor Cindy Fisher, Montour Trail President Ned Williams and Gateway Engineer President Dan Deiseroth look on (left) and their participation on the right.



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To converse go to:
<https://www.facebook.com/groups/43518292159>



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THE MONTOUR TRAIL-LETTER

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A Long Growing Season (encore)

Greetings, Montour Trail folks. It's been an interesting Spring; late cold, then suddenly everything bloomed and the woods went green overnight. Our trail users have responded accordingly, and are out there in droves, taking it all in. We are so happy to see the trail busy again! The volunteers throughout the MTC organization have bloomed as well, and they are hard at work in an astounding variety of ways to manage the trail and to improve it greatly.

Having outgrown our old office in Bridgeville, MTC has moved to new headquarters a few miles south, in Upper St Clair. Many thanks to Deb Thompson, Dave Hajnik, and many others who led the team to take care of numerous issues and details to implement the move. They organized a nice open house event on Saturday, April 29.

In late March a crack was discovered in the eastern portal of Greer Tunnel, forcing a trail closure. The prompt and robust response from the trail leaders, Cecil and Peters Friends groups, MT's volunteer maintenance crew, and a quickly assembled team of engineers and professionals worked together to design and install an emergency fix, getting the trail back open in mid-May. The permanent portal fix and re-lining of the eastern half of the tunnel is a long-planned major project that will start late this summer, under the guidance of project manager Nick Koman. The project is anticipated to be very expensive, so even though MT received an LSA grant, we are doing a separate fundraiser to help out with the costs and to raise awareness.

Montour's volunteer Trail Maintenance crew, anchored by Bill Capp, Dave Jackel and a host of others, has been working hard to repair drainage and re-surface the trail in the South Park area. They will then be active in Peters and Cecil before moving on to a major drainage and surfacing project in the Airport area. It's these guys who create that firm smooth surface which, simply put, is the trail experience, be it step by step, or at each spin of the bike tire. All of the rest of us volunteers, and our trail users, should thank these guys, and strive to remain appreciative of the level of dedication and consistency that they devote to their work.

In a nod to our beginnings, Montour's three-decade partnership with Cecil Township continues to bear fruit. The initial phase of Cecil's project of the connector to Southpointe is finished, and by the time you read this will be nearing a ribbon cutting ceremony. We are grateful to a cadre of Montour folks (going back to Frank Ludwin), to Cecil township leadership, and to the Southpointe business community, especially Crown Castle, for all pulling together on this one. Future phases will extend the connecting trail along Reserve Drive and Klinger Road.

In South Park Township beyond the Library Viaduct, project manager Dave Oyler has adroitly managed the beautiful new trail through Summit Station to its completion. Immediately adjacent, across Wood Street, is the last gap in that area, the long-awaited trail section across the mini storage property to connect with existing trail at Stewart Road. Now clearing final administrative hurdles, this project is planned go into construction later this year. Partial funding has been obtained by a grant from PA DCNR, matched by in-kind and MTC funds.

In addition to those people mentioned above, your Montour Trail Friends Groups, the many Committees, and your Board of Directors are working both harder and smarter than ever in a determined effort to make the Montour as healthy and strong as it can be. We all, of course, have lots of other things going on in our lives. Nevertheless, these Montour people devote big chunks of their time and talents to ensure that the Montour Trail will remain highly maintained and the organization vibrant well into the future, a lavishly crafted gift to the children and grandchildren of the region. May they retain a strong love for health, recreation, and the outdoors!

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 creek. 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 MTC Western Corridor Garage, 450 Cliff Mine Road, North Fayette 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

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)

meets at 4 p.m. on the first Wednesday of the month.

For more information, contact Deb Thompson at: intrepidscout@theneonweb.com

Remember When

30 years ago, 1993: On Sunday, July 18, 2.6 miles of trail open in Findlay Twp from the Enlow Ballfield to near the Airport Parkway.

25 years ago, 1998: The Montour Trail Council receives \$100,000 grant from DCNR to develop the Trail between Jefferson Hills and Clairton.

20 years ago, 2003: Tress were planted along the west bank of Montour Run to stabilize the trail from erosion near Cliff Mine Road.

15 years ago, 2008: The National Tunnel gets paved.

10 years ago, 2013: VB1 is opened in Peters Twp near the sewage plant.

5 years ago, 2018: Wayne Pfrimmer of the Peters Friends plants the 2017 Trail of the Year sign at Library Junction.

Enlow Tunnel Painting over Graffiti - Mile 7.3 by Maryann Hoffman

In June, Will Moore and his father Derik worked three hours painting over graffiti on the walls in the Enlow Tunnel.

Will was a first-class scout at the time of this project. He did the project as one of his community service projects, while working towards the rank of Star. Will is now a Star Scout in Troop 2.



New Peters Twp. Trail Parking Available near MP 30.3

The Peters Friends Group has been notified by trail neighbor Tom Robinson that he is making approximately 70 parking spots in his gated lot available for trail users, from 7:00 a.m. to 7:00 p.m., during which time the gate will be open.

Entrance to the lot is from [150 Valley Brook Rd., Canonsburg PA 15317](#) see picture below. Take the first right after entering the gate (Google street view below), and do NOT park beyond the Porta-john at the beginning of the Always-B-Smiling facility. Please note that the gate is self-opening from the interior, so being a little late in departing will not lock you in for the night.



Join the fun! Annual Meeting in Southpointe Nov. 5

Supporters of the Montour Trail use the Montour Trail Council annual meeting as a great opportunity to meet with others who love the trail and allow it to grow. On Sunday November 5 we'll meet at the Loft Conference Center in Southpointe, near the recently opened Southpointe Connector Trail.

Jeff Kotula, president of the Washington County Chamber of Commerce and Tourism Promotion Agency, will give the keynote address. Jeff and his team were instrumental in planning and funding the Southpointe Connector as well as supporting and promoting trails all across Washington County. He will focus his remarks on strategies to promote outdoor and recreational tourism and its economic impact on the region.

We will begin with a cash bar from 5 p.m. to 6 p.m. followed by a hot buffet dinner from 6 p.m. to 7 p.m.. The business meeting and keynote address will run from 7 p.m. to 8 p.m..

Join us to make and renew friendships with wonderful supporters of the Montour Trail!

Tour the Montour Update

The Greer Tunnel will be closed for the Tour which will require changes for the metric century part of the ride. The ride will probably turn at Tandem Connection and proceed back west and use the Westland Branch to make up the distance. Stay tuned for further updates.

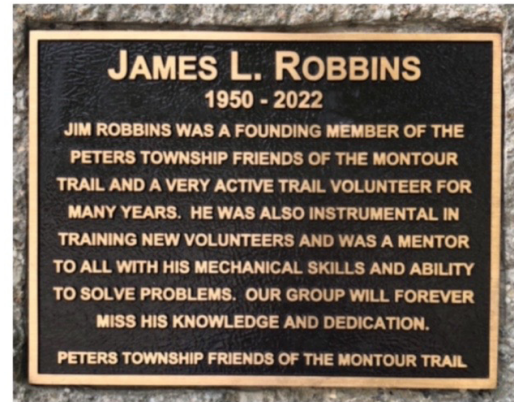


EQT Corporate Work Team Takes the Trail By Storm by Julian Wolfe

On 10 July, a twenty strong corporate work force from EQT deployed along three sections of trail from Cecil to Mt. Pleasant townships to enhance trail conditions. Corporate volunteers undertook a number of projects, to include brush clearing, fence removal, overhanging tree clearance, weeding, and gardening. This is the third year of EQT's valued volunteer support to the Montour Trail. The Council greatly appreciates EQT's continuing commitment to maintain and improve the trail. Thanks also to trail volunteers; Fort Cherry Friends President Deb Esia, Westland Friends former President Dave Hajnik, Westland Friends associate Joe Terrel, Cecil Friends Vice President Bob Mihalco, Cecil Secretary Donna Click, and Cecil



Thanks to volunteers from EQT, we were able to remove nearly 500 feet of unnecessary fencing from the Westland Branch on Monday. This provides three or more feet of additional width to the trail, and will make it easier to mow and clear brush.



Peters Friends Group held a ceremony on June in memory of Jim Robbins who lost his life in a home accident 1 year ago. The event was attended by family, friends and Montour Trail members and a plaque honoring Jim's long term commitment to the trail was placed on the Brush Run storage building. Jim was a founding member of the Peters Friends Group and for many years managed work groups and equipment maintenance for the group as well as volunteering for MTC special events.



Peters Twp Friends' President Wayne Pfrimmer, Karen Robbins and MTC President Ned Williams admire the plaque at the Brush Run Storage building.

For the fifth consecutive year, the Montour Trail has been selected by the readers of Pittsburgh magazine as the top hiking/biking trail in its Best of the 'Burgh. More than 200,000 votes were cast in the annual poll, which rounds up locals' favorite choices in leisure, shopping, dining, and more. The Best of the 'Burgh is the cover story of the magazine's July 2023 issue.

MONTOUR RAILROAD HISTORY

A View of the Champion Preparation Plant

By Bryan Seip - Montour Railroad Historical Society

The Champion Preparation Plant was the busiest industry on the Montour Railroad. Coal from the various Pittsburgh Coal Company mines was shipped to Champion where it was cleaned, sorted, crushed and sized to meet the individual specifications of Pittsburgh Coal Company customers.

Built in 1928, it operated for 55 years before a declining coal market and aging equipment forced its closure. The structures were demolished in the 1990's and now nothing remains of this extensive operation. The site is mostly an empty field along the trail at Mile 12.



This view of the Champion Preparation Plant in operation is from the Rt. 22 overpass, looking south, and shows the layout of the plant. Courtesy of Gene P. Schaeffer, it was taken February 24, 1981, a couple of years before the plant was closed.

The buildings at center are the processing plant. The drying plant with smokestacks is on the left side of the tracks.

The building at far left was the Disco plant. Disco (DIstilled COal) was a product of coal formed similar to charcoal briquets and used as a smokeless fuel for home heating. The disco process also produced coal oil that was loaded into tank cars and used by chemical industries. The 2 engines with accompanying cabooses on the left are on the lead track into the Disco plant, which was closed by the date of the picture.

The two tracks on the right led up the hill to the rotary dumper. Loaded cars from the mines carrying raw coal would be shoved up to the dumper to be unloaded by flipping the cars upside down, with the coal then entering the preparation plant. Note the four engines returning down the hill after shoving a string of loaded hoppers up to the dumper tracks.

The lighter color conveyors at the right carried slate and impurities cleaned out of the mine coal over Rt. 980 to a slate dump on the west side of the road.

The track in lower left to center with 4 engines and empty hoppers is the main line which ran under the conveyors between the plant buildings.

Multiple tracks leading to the plant building make up the empty yard with empty hoppers waiting to be loaded with processed coal. The opposite side of the building had multiple tracks making up the loaded yard.

Champion was a busy place every day with multiple crews working the plant. Note that this picture shows 10 of the 12 engines available to the Montour on that date.

Below the photographer's vantage point was the yardmaster office – about where the current interpretive sign is located along the trail. This building was built in 1930 to house the Montour yardmaster, a company agent and a crew lounge.

Behind the photographer's position was the lead to near-by Boggs Yard. Boggs was used to temporarily store loaded hoppers from the mines while waiting to be unloaded. It could also be used to store empty hoppers needed for final loading of processed coal or empties to be returned to the mines. Boggs Yard was under control of the Champion yardmaster to be used as needed to keep coal traffic flowing in and out of Champion.



This view from the opposite side of the plant shows hoppers loaded with processed coal ready for shipping to final customers.

Note the different textures and sizes of the coal in the hoppers.

For more information and pictures of Champion, go online to: <http://montourrr.com/Mines/MP13Champion.html>

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 Montour Trail Council!

Become a member now!

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



ANNUAL MEMBERSHIP LEVELS

<input type="checkbox"/> Leader's Circle	\$500+
<input type="checkbox"/> Benefactor	\$350 - \$499
<input type="checkbox"/> Sustaining	\$100 - \$249
<input type="checkbox"/> Supporting	\$50 - \$99
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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. Not all new members have be

New Members

Sean Amoroso
 Jennifer Blair
 Renee Brewer
 James Bubash
 Sarah Campman
 Tina Chiodo
 Caitlyn Conaway
 Catherine Davin
 Joseph Decker
 Sean Desguin
 Ray Dubiel
 Denise Dudik
 Timothy Fiedler
 Richard Freeman
 Michele Friday
 Michael Good
 Linda Gregory
 Rich Gregory
 David Haddad
 Aaron Halpine
 Heather Harr
 Trish Hooper
 James Hopeck
 Kori Hough
 Jamie Hunter
 Natalie Jefferis
 Daniel Joyce
 Edward Kach
 Jhony Kaesemodel Pontes
 Brenda Kanar
 Jeffrey Kilcoin

Subrahmanyam Kompala
 Morris Lindsay
 Joe Martin
 Mike Massino
 Betty McGuire
 Judi Meyer
 Kathleen Michalek
 David Misch
 Cindi Muehlbauer
 Erin Murray
 Narad Niroula
 Michael Passalacqua
 Cynthia Pfeifer
 Joseph Riley
 Carmen Rios
 Thomas Ross
 Beverly Rowan
 Michael Saftner
 Katrin Saile
 Barb Saunders
 Virginia Shar
 Cris Shaw
 Craig Smith
 Margaret Smith
 Barb Steinmetz
 Marianne Stetar Hermann
 James Stiffey
 Jeff Tilley
 Mary Beth Tomich
 Jeffrey Uchin
 Thomas Ulrey
 Bernard Watson

Benefactor

Terry Bimle
 Catherine Davin
 Marsie Grant
 Ryan Silvis

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Jennifer Blair
 Rich Caruso
 Samantha and Jonathan Misurda
 Richard Novak
 Randi Starr

IN HONOR

Carol Barley-Barbour
 Sharon Ammons

Fran Hensler
 Erin Hensler

IN MEMORY

James A. Escovitz
 Darlene Knapp

George Gerben
 Gigi Gerben

Jack Harper
 Patricia Carter
 Timothy Donahoe
 Cheryl Englert
 Janis Potter

Nora Jean Hunsinger
 Dennis Hunsinger

John Stephen
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