



MTC Logo: Protecting a Trail Icon *By Ray Paschke*

In 1989, a small group of motivated, forward-thinking volunteers launched a project that has since grown into an award-winning rail trail stretching more than 60 miles. In the second issue of the *Montour Trail-Letter*, published in 1990, the group introduced a new identity: the now-familiar red diamond featuring the words “THE MONTOUR TRAIL.”

Over the past 35-plus years, the logo has remained largely unchanged — except for one notable addition: the circled “R” that now appears beside the word TRAIL. Why was it added?



On January 6, 2026, the Montour Trail logo was registered with the U.S. Patent and Trademark Office. In today’s world where scams, phishing and knockoffs are all too frequent, the Montour Trail Council saw the need to protect itself. One of the means of doing so was to register its mark.

The logo is a type of intellectual property that distinguishes and identifies the source of a good or service. Service marks or trademarks provide a business with a way to protect their identity and the goodwill associated with their services.

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Support the Tunnel: Major Campaign Begins

The Montour Trail Council has approached several area foundations, corporations and state agencies to help finance the renovation of the shuttered National Tunnel in Cecil Township.

“This is one of the largest capital projects that the Montour Trail Council has ever undertaken,” says Julian Wolfe, MTC president.

The price tag for the work: \$2.75 million. “This far exceeds the council’s ability to fund the project from our own coffers,” he says.

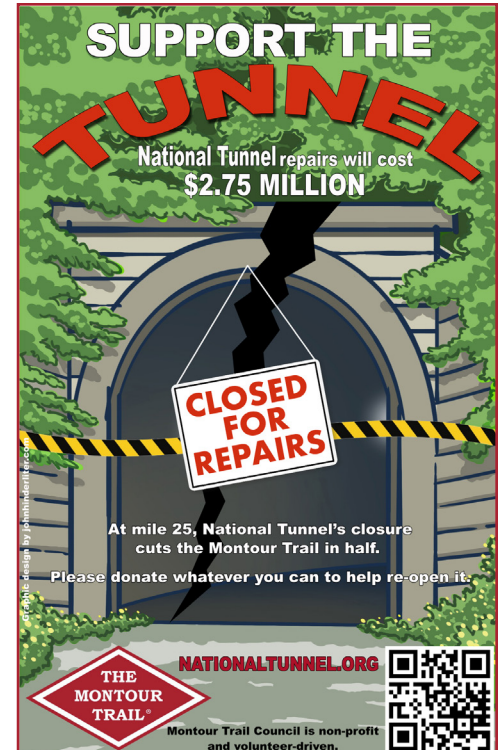
“We are facing a heavy lift to finance this renovation and get it reopened for the enjoyment of all trail users. As we have said previously, it will take some time and considerable fundraising.

“We know, though, that we can depend on our trail users, area businesses and corporations, foundations, and other trail supporters to support the trail council’s efforts to meet this challenge.”

Key funding for large projects on the Montour since the trail’s founding in 1989 has come from state agencies, including the Department of Conservation and Natural Resources, and the trail council is hopeful about engaging them in this project.

A public fundraising campaign will commence in April, with the slogan, Support the Tunnel. Trail users can donate on the MTC website, montourtrail.org, and at nationaltunnel.org.

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Remembering Jesse Forquer, 1942-2026

By Mark Imgrund

We at the Montour Trail Council were saddened to learn of the passing of Jesse Forquer, a longtime volunteer and MTC board member whose steady presence and practical leadership helped shape the experience of trail users.

Jesse served the trail council as director of trail security and worked to grow and strengthen the Trail Monitor Patrol program, which he helped establish with Bill Morphy in 1998. In that role, he also worked hard to develop cooperative relationships with law enforcement across the many communities the Montour Trail passes through.

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The Montour Trail Council is a volunteer-driven 501(c)(3) nonprofit that acts as a land trust, responsible for preserving green space within the trail's viewscape. The MTC owns and manages the 60-plus-mile Montour Trail in Allegheny and Washington counties in Southwestern PA.

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Prez Sez:

The Neighborhood Face of the Montour Trail

By Julian Wolfe

Among the most pivotal organizations within the Montour Trail Council are its Friends Groups. These seven neighborhood organizations (Airport Area, Fort Cherry, Cecil, Westland, Peters Township, Bethel Park, and South Hills) fulfill many roles. Trail users will often observe these volunteers from our Friends Groups working as shock troops, responding to downed trees and other hazards impeding travel along our 60-plus-mile trail.

The mid-March windstorms that rampaged through the Pittsburgh metropolitan region are a good case in point. In Cecil Township alone, nearly 20 trees crashed onto the trail. The Cecil Friends Group mobilized quickly and had almost all of the trees cleared within 48 hours.

It is important, however, to present a fuller picture of the multifaceted roles and responsibilities carried out by MTC's Friends Groups. They are typically made up of residents from the surrounding communities, and their deep local roots make them invaluable partners. They engage with neighbors, township officials, local businesses, and civic organizations, building relationships that strengthen the Montour's presence and reputation. Their on-the-ground knowledge is essential for safeguarding trail property — whether preventing encroachments, planning for new adjacent development, coordinating with local law enforcement and first responders to enhance safety, or working with utilities to ensure that construction and repair projects intersecting the trail are properly managed.

Our Friends Groups also acquire, maintain and service their own equipment and, in some cases, manage components of MTC's vehicle fleet. From the hedge trimmers and loppers to riding tractors, each Friends Group owns a significant arsenal of equipment to conduct routine maintenance, which keeps the trail in such remarkable condition throughout the year. Routine and emergency maintenance on our tractors alone is quite a significant time investment.

Keeping these tools in good working order enhances other programs not particularly visible to our trail users. Friends Groups organize and manage numerous corporate volunteer work projects. In addition, Friends Groups undertake preventive maintenance work on their sections of the trail. Efforts to identify and remove dead and dying trees are yet another crucial element in the trail's program to provide a safe recreational experience.

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Westland Friends supervise corporate volunteer work crew.



Bethel Park Friends volunteer clears leaves from trail.



Cecil Friends volunteer clears fallen tree.

Trail Friends' Meetings and Work Parties

MTC Board Meeting

Every third Monday of the month at 6:30 p.m. at 2589 Boyce Plaza Rd., 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 (MM 0 to 12.6 and the 6.3 mile Airport Connector)

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 Rd., North Fayette Township 15108. New volunteers are always welcome. For more information, call Mark Modispacher at 412-266-1544. Work parties are scheduled as needed. For more information call 412-262-3748.

Fort Cherry Friends (MM 12.6 to 20.7)

Friends of the Trail meet every second Wednesday of the month at 6:30 p.m. at the McDonald Trail Station, 160 S. McDonald St., McDonald 15057 (adjacent to the Panhandle Trail). Work parties are scheduled as needed. For more information, contact Tim Thomassy at 724-926-4617 or Chuck Hughey at 724-926-9436.

Cecil Friends (MM 22.0 to 28.5)

Friends of the Trail meet every fourth Wednesday of the month at 6:30 p.m. at the Kurnick Access area along the trail off Cecil Henderson Road. Work parties are scheduled as needed. For more information, contact Bob Mihalco at 786-910-5575 or ramihalco@icloud.com.

The Montour Railroad Historical Society

For more information, email mrhs@montourrr.com.

Peters Township Friends (MM 28.5 to 30.4, Library Jct to near MM 35 and part of the Bethel Branch)

Friends of the Trail meet the first non-holiday Monday of each month at 7:00 p.m. at various locations depending on weather and time of year. Work parties on the first Friday and third Saturday of every month at 8:30 a.m. 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 MM 35).

Friends of the Trail meet 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 parties, every second and fourth Saturday of the month at 8:30 a.m. For more information, call Bill Capp at 412-833-5928.

South Hills Friends (MM 35.4 to 46.6)

Friends of the Trail meet every second Tuesday of the month at 6:30 p.m. at South Park Township Community Room or the Township Library located in the Township Building at 2675 Brownsville Rd., South Park 15129. Work 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.

Westland Friends (MM 21.0 to 21.9, and Westland Branch)

Friends of the Trail meet every first Wednesday of the month. For more information, contact Deb Thompson at intrepidscout@theneonweb.com.

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Friends Groups also contribute their talents and energies to reduce the cost of important capital improvement projects. Every year, the trail council's Engineering and Construction Committee prepares a list of priority initiatives for the coming year, such as streambank and scour protection, infrastructure repairs and new trail construction.

Many of these projects often utilize the expertise and equipment of professional contractors. That said, the Friends Groups regularly undertake valuable and skilled work that reduces capital expenditures and allows savings to be redirected to other critical

projects. Within the past few years, our industrious Friends Groups have taken on important projects such as regrading flood-prone areas, installing and repairing fencing, resurfacing old railroad bridges, and constructing accessibility parking.

There are other aspects of Friends Groups, which will be highlighted in a future column. In the meantime, if you are interested in joining a Friends Group, please check the information above this story for contact information and meeting times. Huzzah.

This is the first in an occasional series.

MTC to Host 'Celebrate Trails Day' Event

Montour Trail Council volunteers will be trailside at Tandem Connection (near mile marker 27) to "Celebrate Trails Day" on Saturday, April 25.

From 9 a.m. to 2 p.m., the volunteers will provide information about MTC membership and updates about the renovation of the shuttered National Tunnel in Cecil Township, which was closed in November.

Additionally, Montour Trail t-shirts, hats and other merchandise will be available for a donation, and free hot dogs and beverages will be offered.

Celebrate Trails Day, which is observed throughout the country, is an opportunity for the community to demonstrate that trails matter — for health and physical activity, for conservation, and for the future of outdoor recreation.



continued from page 1- National Tunnel

The trail council mounted a highly successful fundraising campaign for the Greer Tunnel two years ago after it was closed for renovation. That project cost roughly \$1.25 million.

The trail council expects fundraising for the National Tunnel to continue through the end of 2026 when it anticipates state agencies will have determined if they can contribute to the cost of the project. A request for bids for the project will be released in early 2027, with a contractor selected in early Spring and work completed later that year. When the contractor has finished, electricians will reinstall tunnel lighting and a metal fabricator will make doors for the western portal.

The National Tunnel, at mile marker 25, was built in 1913. At 630-feet-long, this curved tunnel is the longest of the three tunnels on the Montour and one of its most recognizable landmarks. It was closed in November due to the significant deterioration of the ceiling that made it unsafe for trail use.

The tunnel renovation project will entail installing a 295-foot steel liner on the western portion of the structure.

Thus far, the MTC has invested \$36,000 from its trail maintenance fund to shore up the tunnel ceiling and close both entrances. It is also spending \$40,000 for engineering design work needed to estimate the renovation expenses underlying the project budget and prepare the bid package. These initial costs were not included in the project budget.

continued from page 1- Trademark

The Montour Trail believes it provides a first-class recreational opportunity, and it is generally acknowledged that it does so. To protect this reputation and the association between it and its logo, it was registered.

The Montour Trail obtained two registrations:

- Reg. No. 8,093,558 for Class 41, which covers the provision of trail services.
- Reg. No. 8,093,668 for Classes 9, 16, 21 and 25, which cover various physical goods such as maps, bottles, mugs, t-shirts, and the like.

Federal trademark registration provides nationwide protection along with official documentation and a legal presumption of ownership. This strengthens the trail council's ability to defend its brand and ensures that the Montour Trail name and logo are used appropriately.

As the Montour Trail Council continues to maintain and expand the trail, the diamond-shaped logo serves as a promise: The services we provide and the gear we offer will reflect the same high standards we have upheld since our founding.

Special thanks go to attorney Sam Merritt of the Charlotte, NC, law firm of Moore & Van Allen, who generously provided pro bono assistance in filing and monitoring the applications over several months. Gratitude is also due to the many trail volunteers who sifted through decades of paperwork, clothing and photographs to document the logo's long history of use.

Please visit: aerotechdesigns.com/montour-trail-classic-cycling-jersey/ to buy a sharp-looking cycling jersey and zazzle.com/store/timkillmeyer to see gear sold with the MTC logo.



Jesse played a key role in trail safety and service.

continued from page 1- Remembering Jesse

Those who worked alongside Jesse remember his dedication not as an "office" commitment, but as something visible on the trail day after day. As longtime patrol volunteer Tony Prezioso shared, "He (Jesse) started me on patrol many, many years ago. I saw him out there so often. Whenever I reported a downed tree, he often attacked the removal himself to clear the trail ASAP. I thought I was putting a lot of miles and time patrolling, but he was head and shoulders volunteering more than any of us. He was so very dedicated to keeping the trail open and safe for the public."

Jesse also gave his time to major events and fundraising efforts that directly benefited the Montour Trail, including serving as director of the IKEA Half Marathon for four years and recruiting volunteers for the annual IKEA Christmas Tree Sale fundraiser.

We are grateful for Jesse's many years of service and the example he set — showing up, pitching in, and always keeping the trail's safety and stewardship at the center of the work.

Storm Battered Multiple Trail Sections, Volunteers Tackle the Damage



Persistent storms in recent weeks have battered several sections of the trail.

(A) In Cecil, torrents of water, mud, branches, and debris swept down the hillside and onto the corridor.

(B) On March 7, ten volunteers from the Cecil Friends Group tackled their section, removing multiple fallen trees and branches.

(C) Farther south, around mile marker 44.25 between Large and Clairton, only the top of a bench remains visible after a heavy layer of mud, “red dog” from historic coal waste and coal washed down from an abandoned strip mine in the valley above.

(D) The Construction Crew rolled in an excavator to clear a clogged drain pipe beneath the trail near mile marker 22.5.



Volunteer Honored with Achievement Award

Zach Ordo (left), former co-chair of the MTC’s IT/GIS Committee, received a Special Achievement Award from President Julian Wolfe (right) at the February board meeting. Mr. Ordo, who began volunteering with the Montour Trail in 2011, played a pivotal role in organizing the committee and frequently applied his GIS expertise to support the work of the trail’s standing committees, Mr. Wolfe noted. Mr. Ordo shared that he came to Pittsburgh for college, chose to stay after graduating and soon began cycling on the Montour. Encounters with dedicated volunteers along the trail inspired him to get involved with the MTC.

Annual Bike Blessing is April 18

The 5th annual Blessing of the Bicycles and Bicyclists will take place at mile zero of the Montour Trail in Moon Township at 10 a.m. on Saturday, April 18.

Tim Killmeyer, a Diocese of Pittsburgh deacon and a founding member of the trail council, will officiate the ceremony, which is free and open to people of all faiths. “We’ll bless our favorite means of recreation and transportation and thank God for the beauty of the world we traverse on them,” he said.

After the blessing, which is sponsored by the Montour Trail’s Airport Area Friends Group and Archangel Gabriel parish, cyclists are encouraged to ride up the trail at a distance of their choosing.

The rain date for the blessing is Saturday, April 25, same time, same place.

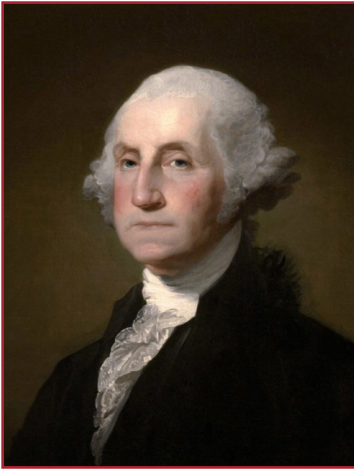
GIS Help Wanted

The Montour Trail Council seeks volunteers with experience using Esri’s ArcGIS Online web-based platform to assist with property mapping and land record documentation. This role supports the trail’s long-term stewardship and management by improving the accuracy and organization of our real estate records through utilization of GIS (Geographic Information Systems) technology. Responsibilities include updating plat maps, identifying land interests (including type of title) and mapping utility crossings along the trail. Experience with parcel data, real estate terminology, and ArcGIS Pro and ArcGIS Online required; familiarity with transactions in Allegheny and Washington counties preferred; approximately four hours per week (flexible). If interested, email volunteer@montourtrail.org.

Montour Railroad History

George Washington's Land

By Bryan Seip, Montour Railroad Historical Society



Before becoming the nation's first president, George Washington was a businessman and a military leader. While working as a surveyor, he traveled through much of what is currently Western Pennsylvania. In 1771, as a businessman expanding his interests in the "West," he traveled through what is now Washington County while acquiring landholdings in colonial Pennsylvania, Virginia and Ohio.

One such holding was a plot of acreage in the Millers Run area. A survey by Col. William Crawford in 1771 showed this land as being part of the Virginia Colony (West Virginia was not a separate state until 1863). The land was granted in appreciation for Washington's assistance to the British during the French and Indian War. Comprising 2,813 acres, the parcel was patented to Washington by Lord Dunmore, the Royal Colonial Governor of Virginia, with the property deed being finalized in 1774.

Col. Crawford's map showed a large rectangular-shaped plot of about 4.4 square miles, running from the current sites of Southview to Fort Cherry and west nearly to Hickory, with Millers Run flowing through the property. The land was mostly forested or cleared farmland.

When the Montour Railroad was built over a century later, it ran through the former Washington land in two places. One section runs 1.8 miles on the main trail from near Peacock Cut (mile marker 19.5) to Antil Street in Southview (mile marker 21.3). The other is along the Montour Trail's Westland Branch from Hillmore Lane (Westland mile 0.7) to the bottom of the hill on Hornhead Road (Westland mile 1.5), so about 2.5 miles of trail are on Washington's former land.

An accord over state boundaries was reached in 1784, placing this land in Pennsylvania. In that year, Washington visited several of his landholdings, including the Millers Run tract. During this trip, he met with 13 settlers who had been living on the land without paying rent

or crop royalties. He visited each of the farms and detailed what structures and improvements had been made that increased the land's value.

Washington met with the squatters at the David Reed house on Southview Road and offered to buy out their claims. Believing their improvements gave them rightful ownership, they refused. Washington then filed an eviction suit, and after two years of building his case, he prevailed in the Pennsylvania Supreme Court.

In the 1790s, Washington leased the land to new tenants, but ongoing problems with absentee ownership and unreliable local agents diminished his interest. He sold the property in 1796, yet the buyer defaulted on the mortgage, leaving Washington to retain title until his death in 1799.

Over a century later, as coal mines were being opened along the new Montour Railroad, Montour Mine #1 and its supporting village of Southview were constructed on the former Washington land. Most of the remaining acreage continued to be worked as farmland.

During Washington's ownership, no significant buildings or industries were established on the tract — no mills, businesses, inns, taverns, or notable settlements. As a result, the property never attracted the professional archaeological studies, historical markers, or commercial attention associated with many of his other holdings.

None of the 13 settlers' homes or buildings remain. The David Reed house, probably the last remaining building, was torn down in 1940. The land remains mostly as open farmland and scattered houses, much as it appeared during Washington's ownership



Col. Crawford's map showing Washington's property.
(Photo: Historic Fort Cherry archives)



The David Reed house along Southview Road in 1940.
(Photo: Historic Fort Cherry archives)

The Historic Fort Cherry Association provided valuable information and assistance for this story. To explore more of southwestern Pennsylvania's history, please visit HistoricFortCherry.org.

The unveiling and dedication of a historical plaque commemorating President Washington's tract will be May 14 near the Montour Trail's mile marker 20.5 in Mount Pleasant Township.

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 you'll find a wealth of information about the Montour Railroad and you can pose questions of its membership. You can also check out montourrr.com

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Complete this form, scan the QR code, or go to montourtrail.org/support-us/



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Why More Donors Are Using DAFs

“Donor-advised funds are increasingly becoming more popular as donors realize their advantages of sending gifts to nonprofits such as the Montour Trail,” says Joe McKittrick, MTC’s Finance Committee chair.

You can make a contribution from your donor-advised fund by giving through your DAF provider (such as Fidelity, Edward Jones or Bank of America) or by visiting the Montour Trail donation page at: montourtrail.org/donor-advised-funds/.

A donor-advised fund is a charitable giving account that allows donors to make a charitable contribution, receive an immediate tax deduction and then recommend grants from the fund to their favorite charities.

Benefits to donors include:

- Tax efficiency: Donors can avoid capital gains tax on appreciated

assets donated directly to the DAF, maximizing the amount available for charity.

- Flexibility and simplicity: DAFs centralize charitable giving and simplify record-keeping, providing one consolidated tax receipt per contribution. Donors can contribute when it’s most tax-advantageous and recommend grants at a later date, providing time to develop a strategic philanthropic vision.

Your generous DAF donation to the Montour Trail will support crucial 2026 projects that include:

- Supporting a major renovation of the trail’s landmark tunnel, the shuttered National Tunnel.
- Resurfacing the trail in the Cecil, Peters and South Park sections by the MTC’s volunteer maintenance team.
- Building a new sidewalk along Rt. 51 in Jefferson Hills Borough (mile marker 43.5) that will improve trail-user safety.

Welcome New Trail Members and Donors

The Montour Trail Council welcomes these new members and donors and thanks them for their support. We would also like to thank all our members and donors who have recently renewed their annual contributions. Please note that foundations and other grant-making agencies often look at a strong membership as one criterion in their consideration of our funding requests. Not all new members have been entered as of our print deadline and will be listed in the next edition of the *Trail-Letter*.

Champion

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 Buffington
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Stephen Bowles
 Maria Byrge
 Mark Cappello
 John & Kathy Drescher
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In Memory Jesse Forquer

Dave Borrebach

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