Work progresses in Robinson Township, Washington County

by Tim Kilbey

Despite weather forecasts of every description for the weekends of April, each Saturday turned out to have just the right kind of weather for beginning a section of Trail. This newest section of Trail is in Robinson Township, Washington County, just outside of McDonald. While the Robinson road crew began the installation of culverts (purchased by the MTC) to alleviate drainage problems, the Montour Trail Council volunteers began to gate off and post temporary signs at access points of the Trail. This will help prevent spurious use of the Trail by offroad vehicles and illegal dumpers.

The volunteers spent the remainder of the Saturdays removing any old railroad ties that were laying within ten feet of either side of the center line. This will allow the Robinson road crew to grade the right of way and to dig ditches without any complications. It will also allow us to mow grass and weeds for up to five feet on either side of the Trail when the section is completed. Other work to be done includes picking up trash, removing a couple of derelict vehicles, burning brush dumped near the right of way after it was abandoned, and installing more locust posts and split rail fence.

If you would like to help get the next five miles of Trail completed by the end of the summer, consider giving us one of your Saturdays this year. We have jobs for both men and women. We meet every Saturday at 9:00 am outside of McDonald under the trestle, about 3 miles down Rt. 980 from the McDonald exit of Rt. 22. Call 262-3748 for more information.

Donation by trail-guide editors provides porta-potties for Trail users

For the second year in a row, a donation Roy Weil and Mary Shaw has allowed the Montour Trail Council to supply the much requested Porta-potties at various points along the Trail.

As you may know, Roy Weil and Mary Shaw are the editors of the highly popular trail guide Freewheeling Easy in W. Pa. as well as the Canoeing Guide to Western Pennsylvania. Their donation of $1,200, along with a price break from Mr. John Inc. (rent three, get one free), will allow the MTC to rent four porta-potties through October of this year. These are among the most requested amenities to the Trail.

The MTC is now deciding if it might make more sense (and cents) to start to purchase a few porta-potties each year and just have them serviced by Mr. John. The units cost over $600 each and it would cost $25 a month to have each one emptied and cleaned. It now costs $300 a month to rent the ones we have. so if we purchased four of them we could recoup our money over two, six month seasons.

We would like to thank Roy and Mary for their generous donation. This is the type of item that we don’t usually get grants for and the monies for them must come from the general operating fund, i.e., your dues.

For a copy of Freewheeling Easy in W. Pa., send a check or money order for $9.95 to: Shaw-Weil Associates, 414 S. Craig St., #307, Pgh, Pa. 15236
Letters

How often have we heard that local trail groups in that landowning neighbor to the people who live along the abandoned trail of the old Monro Trail. Recent news reports tell us that other groups that are meeting resistance to their trail plans because the adjacent landowners want the courts to uphold the easement rights that were written into their deeds. Federal rail banking laws state that these rights of way can remain intact so that rail trails can be used for transportation or railfan activities. Unlike other rail trails, the Monro Trail was developed to allow the railroad to continue to operate on the land. The railroad sold us the rights to use the land in the 1980's, through 1990's. Is 95% of it being abandoned? It's being sold, not abandoned. Other rail trails in the area have rail banking laws that allow them to operate on the land. In many people's minds trail organizations are all one in the same. They hear the word rail-trail and they think the Monro Trail Council is the same group that is building trail in Armstrong County. It's not. The Monro Trail Council owns its trail land. The rail trail groups that we have talked to have rail banking laws that allow them to operate on the land. When the railroad sold us the rights to use the land, they sold the owner to the railroad. We are not sure what the Monro Trail Council was thinking when they sold the land. They never looked at the owner to the railroad, or the rail trail organizations. We are not sure what they were thinking when they sold the land. They never looked at the rail banks laws that allow them to operate on the land. In many people's minds trail organizations are all one in the same.
**MTC Board Meeting**, every third Monday of the month - Fifth floor of the Allegheny County Office Bldg. in the Engineering Dept., at 6:00pm. All MTC members are welcome to attend. Call Marshall at 531-8628 for more information or to get on the agenda.

**New Construction: Robinson, Washington County** - work crews will meet Saturdays, beginning in April, at the base of the McDonald Trestle near the intersection of Rt. 980 and Nobletown Rd. just outside of McDonald, at 9:00am. All are invited to join us as we add six more miles to the Trail! For more information call Dennis at 762-4857 or 262-3748. For information about a weekday workcrew, call Tim at 787-1472.

**Cecil Friends of the Trail meeting**, every first Tuesday of the month - in the Boy Scout room at the Cecil American Legion, Rt. 50, 7:30. Call 221-6406.

**Work & Clean-up party**, Cecil segment, every third Saturday of the month - 9:00 am. Meet at the Kernick Tract parking area. Call 221-6406 for more information. (No work in March)

**Moon/Robinson Friends of the Trail meeting**, Every Wednesday before the second Saturday of the month at 7:00. At the All Occasion Catering party room near the intersection of Silver Lane and Clever Rds. in Robinson Twp. Anyone from the communities near Moon and Robinson are encouraged to attend. Call 859-3020 more information.

**Work & Clean-up party**, Moon/Robinson segment, every second Saturday of the month - 9:00am. Meet at North Star Petroleum (Formerly Robinson Petroleum). Call 262-3748 for more information. (No work in March)

**Findlay/ North Fayette Friends of the Trail Call Don at 899-3695 for more information.**

**Work & Clean-up party**, Findlay/North Fayette segment, every forth Saturday of the month - 9:00 am. Meet at the Enlow Ballfield. Call 695-2354 for more information. (No work in March)

**Pennies for your Trail - Saturday, May 18 from 10:00 am to 4:00pm. Bring your pennies, nickles, dimes, quarters, half dollars, silver dollars and paper money to the intersection of Montour Run Rd. and Park Manor Blvd. or to the beginning of the Trail at Groveton, just off the Coraopolis Exit of I-79 to be eligible for a plethora of prizes.**

Visit the Montour Trail web-site at: [www.pitt.edu/~shnst4/montour1.html](http://www.pitt.edu/~shnst4/montour1.html)

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 2

adjacent landowners we have contacted so far. In fact, of the approximately 20 miles of Trail that we have developed so far, only three people have expressed concerns and two of those have been placated by signs and landscaping solutions. The third lives near an undeveloped section and is proving to be a much tougher case despite the fact that he has no claim to our property.

**My point is that** thus far we have been extraordinarily lucky regarding our neighbors. But something different is happening now. On March 18, Dick Quasey, two of his visiting relatives, and I hand delivered letters to each of the houses bordering the Trail in Robinson, Washington County, along Rt. 980 (near Quicksilver Golf Course outside of McDonald).

It was your typical “Hello Neighbor” letter explaining who we are and what our project is all about. At the end of the letter I explained, as nicely as I could, that behind their houses our property extends 50 feet on both sides of the centerline of the old right of way. I wrote that we intended to clean it up over the next couple of months so if they had anything on the property that they didn’t want to lose, they should remove it as soon as possible. At the end I put my voice-mail number with the Trail Council if they had any questions.

I should tell you that some of the present owners and many of the previous owners used the area next to the railroad as a burn area for their trash and a dump for their brush and other hard to dispose of items. There is even an abandoned pickup truck and pop-up camper back there.

**Well nobody called** to complain but a month later, next to the Trail, there was another junk car and a huge pile of brush from a tree someone had cut down in their yard. Apparently they like the idea of a Trail behind their house but since we are going to clean up the area anyway, they might as well get rid of what they can so we can haul it out.

**We plan on** getting rid of the new stuff along with everything else back there without complaint (to them), and I realize that it is only one or two bad apples, but people like that sure do make it hard to “Love your Neighbor.”

Tim
South Park Township plans inch forward

The proposed mile and a half of Trail to be built in South Park Township has cleared another major hurdle. The Township Planning Commission has given final approval to a new stretch of Trail between Stewart Rd. and Triphammer Rd. in South Park. Given the recommendation of the Planning Commission, we expect approval by the township supervisors who have already given their preliminary approval.

The bad news is that the bridge that carries the Trail over Brownsville/Library Rd. needs to be removed and replaced with another bridge or another road at grade crossing.

Now we have to wait for the Allegheny County Commissioners to approve a funding agreement with the MTC. This will allow MTC to provide $145,000 to the county for a construction contract. Regional Asset District is providing $40,000, Allegheny Land Trust - $45,000, and a private source - $10,000. The Pennsylvania Dept. of Conservation & Natural Resources is expected to reimburse $50,000.

This section of Trail is different from other sections because the township does not have the equipment to help with construction. Bidding for the project by county contractors will commence as soon as the funding agreement is in place.

If you would like to help prepare the South Park section for construction (saving extra contractor costs) call Dave Carlson at 831-8304. He will be planning volunteer work parties in the near future.

An open letter from Stan Siranovich, new MTC volunteer coordinator

Hello,

As Tim pointed out in the last newsletter, 1995 was a big year for the Montour Trail. We now have 21 miles of the Trail on the ground, representing a lot of work by a lot of people. In addition to the actual construction, a lot of other less apparent work was necessary to make it all happen. This included buying and maintaining equipment, purchasing supplies, writing grant proposals, and finally, working with Allegheny County and the various townships that the Trail passes through. All this has been done on an ad hoc basis, one section at a time, one project at a time.

With 1996 promising to be an even bigger year with even more activity, the “old way” of doing things will no longer be adequate. There is a need not only for more volunteers, but also for volunteers with specialized skills for particular projects. That is why I have agreed to accept the post of volunteer coordinator.

The Montour Trail has been extremely successful over the past several years, but it is now at a critical point. It is facing many challenges: the construction of two new sections this year, the need for rehabilitation of several bridges, maintenance of the completed sections, and, of course, the continual need to find the funding for all these activities.

If you returned a volunteer form and haven’t heard from us or if you had to decline a previous request, you might be hearing from us soon. There are many volunteer opportunities ranging from those of shorter duration and lower commitment such as trailblazer, to those of longer duration and higher commitment such as project coordinator or committee chair. So the appropriate question is not “Do I have the time?” It is “What can I do in the time available?” Say yes, if you can, when another volunteer calls to ask for your help.

Thank you,
Stan
WELCOME  
NEW MEMBERS  
☆ Carol Adams  
☆ William L. Atkinson  
☆ Peter Casillo  
☆ Charles Conners  
☆ Mary Ellen Cook  
☆ Harry & Judy Corwin  
☆ Clint Cottrell  
☆ Trent G. Denison  
☆ Bill Ehler  
☆ Rosemary P. Foster  
☆ Bob Gambone  
☆ Richard C. Gibson  
☆ Andrew Glaid  
☆ Richard C. Guzel  
☆ Vladimir W. Hanczar  
☆ Ronald L. Henry  
☆ Carl R. Lippert  
☆ Robert J. Meier  
☆ Roy & Tammy Price  
☆ Timothy J. Ruff  
☆ Michon T. Sentner  
☆ Gale L. Seymour  
☆ Robin Shoup  
☆ Charlie S. Smithers  
☆ Patricia Stanley  
☆ David T. Stoeb  
☆ Bob & Diane Unetzich  
☆ Thomas R. Warren  
☆ Craig Whipkey  
☆ Sharon Wynkoop

The Montour Trail Council would like to welcome these new members and thank them for their support. We would also like to thank all our members who have renewed their membership and remind all that a growing membership is one of the criteria foundations look for when they apply for grants.

Coraopolis doesn't have space for this gazebo anymore, so they are donating it to the Montour Trail Council for use on the Trail. It is able to be transported on its own trailer. Boardmember Bill Murphy is investigating zoning regulations and acquiring PennDot permits for the move. Tentative plans call for it to be located near the water fountain at the intersection of Park Manor Blvd. and Montour Run Rd. It will make a nice shelter for those who find themselves on the Trail in the middle of a downpour. If you would like to help with the installation, please call 787-1182.

Yes, I want to help build the Montour Trail!

☐ I want to spread the word. Please send me additional flyers.
☐ I have written my Legislator and County Commissioners asking them to support the Trail.
☐ My organization would like to provide a letter of endorsement.
☐ I know a group interested in a presentation.
☐ I wish to become a member of the Montour Trail Council.

☐ STUDENT $5
☐ INDIVIDUAL $15
☐ FAMILY $25
☐ ORGANIZATION $50
☐ SUPPORTING $50
☐ SUSTAINING $100
☐ BENEFACCTOR $250 + up

(Membership is tax deductible)

☐ I wish to make an additional tax deductible contribution of $ to the Montour Trail Council to help make the Montour Trail a reality.

(Make your check payable to the Montour Trail Council)

NAME __________________________
ADDRESS _________________________
CITY ____________________________
STATE ________ ZIP _____________
PHONE (day time) __________ (evening) __________

By applying for membership in the Montour Trail Council, I indicate my support of its goals.

SIGNATURE _______________________

A copy of the official registration and financial information may be obtained from the Pennsylvania Department of State by calling tollfree, within Pennsylvania, 1-800-732-0999. Registration does not imply endorsement.

Please fill out this application and return it with your check to:

MONTOUR TRAIL COUNCIL
P.O. BOX 11866
PITTSBURGH PA. 15228-0866

DON'T FORGET! The Montour Trail Council may be designated as your United Way Contributor Choice option #3308 where you work.

Political Action Committee

volunteers are needed to help make sure the concerns of the Montour Trail are heard in Harrisburg and Washington D.C. Please call 922-1702 if you would like to help.
Allegheny County Rail-Trail System

Completed Trail is solid line
Acquired sections are filled in dots.
Proposed sections are hollow dots.

Shown above is the recently published map of the Allegheny Rail-Trail System. Because of the developing austerity program promulgated by Allegheny County, the drive to complete these trails in a timely fashion might be sacrificed. It is incumbent upon us as trail users, MTC members and citizens to remind our government officials how much these trails mean to the health, economy, and livability of our community. Please call or write our Board of County Commissioners and thank them for what they have done in the past and remind them that the job is not finished. Tell them how much these trails mean to you and your friends and families.

You can mail your letters to: Chairman Larry Dunn
c/o Board of County Commissioners
Room 119
436 Grant St.
Pittsburgh, Pa., 15219-2499
Those crazy guys and gals in the Moon/Robinson Friends of the Trail group are at it again. Just when they have finish counting up all those pennies that they collected last year, they decide that they will do it again. The prizes this year include a getaway weekend at the Airport Marriott, dinners at local restaurants, running shoes and more.

The format will remain the same as last year. Just bring all those pennies (and other coins) that have been lying around your house for the last decade or so down to the Trail on Saturday, May 18. The volunteers will have collection stations set up between 10:00am and 4:00pm at the beginning of the Trail at Groveton and at the intersection of Park Manor Blvd. and Montour Run Rd. (below Robinson Town Centre). There, they will put the coins into canvas bank bags and weigh them on an electronic scale. The people who donate the most coins by weight will win.

Last year this successful campaign raised over $2,000. The Friends hope to do at least as well this year. All of the money will go toward improving and maintaining the Moon/Robinson section of the trail. Some suggestions have been to help pay for improvements to the Park Manor intersection or a side mounted brush hog for the tractor so it is easier to cut the grass and weeds next to the Trail. Others want a bridge to connect the Trail to the park and facilities in Groveton. Other smaller items that are needed include gasoline, paint, tools, lumber, etc.

If you would like to help with the Pennies Campaign, volunteers are always needed and welcome. The Friends would like to get as many as possible this year to help canvass autos at the intersection for spare change. Call Dean at 921-4921 to schedule a time.

Order form for the Incredible Inch Campaign
Disclaimer: You won’t actually own a piece of the Montour Trail, but we appreciate your donation.

The whole Montour Trail is now “for sale”. All 3,484,800 inches of it. Buy it by the inch, foot, yard, rod, meter, furlong, mile or league. It is all the same reasonable price; a buck an inch. That’s right, a buck an inch! And your inches run the whole ten foot width of the trail (that’s 120 inches wide).

You can be creative: add up the height of your entire family and buy that many inches of trail, or measure the length of your whole family’s feet. How long is your dog? Buy his length in inches of trail. Or, if you a little short, just buy the length of his tail. And they make great gifts for that active friend. If we “sold” every inch of trail, it would pay for the whole thing.

For your money, you will receive a genuine, simulated hand-lettered, faux-embossed, 8 1/2 x 11 inch official looking “deed” (suitable for framing), that will proudly proclaim your ownership of the trail (with the requisite fingerprint). This beautiful document will show the total number of inches you “own” and the township in which they are located.

Please fill out this form and return it with your check to:
MTC INCREDIBLE INCH CAMPAIGN
1060 STANFORD RD.
PITTSBURGH PA. 15205

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NUMBER OF INCHES: __________

CIRCLE THE COMMUNITIES THAT YOU WOULD LIKE NAMED ON YOUR “DEED”:
I wonder if I'm spending too much time on this Montour Trail?

— NAAAAAHH!

The photo on top (by Bill Nixon) was featured in our July 1994 issue.