MTC purchase – 72 acres of RR property

by Dennis Pfeiffer

An exciting new chapter in the history of the Montour Trail has begun. After ten months of behind-the-scenes negotiations and intense meetings, the Montour Trail Council has purchased 72 acres of property from the bankrupt Montour Railroad. These 72 acres parallel the Montour Trail from mile 0 at Montour Road to the Enlow tunnel at mile 7.3. This property, which varies in width from 30 to 200 feet, can now be preserved. This purchase will prevent further removal of forest cover or disturbance of wetlands and will be key to the well-being of the Montour Trail in the Airport area. It forms the backbone of the proposed Montour Greenway, and it will protect a significant portion of the natural areas remaining along Montour Run. The purchase of the property for $185,000 was finalized on Wednesday, November 22, 2000. In addition, a new partnership with the Allegheny Land Trust (ALT) has been established. The ALT, who will be the eventual owner of the property, has agreed to assist us financially with the acquisition. The financial plan and the ALT relationship will be explained later in this article.

A little history is probably required to help you understand this purchase. The Montour Trail Council and Allegheny County purchased the Montour Railroad property, fee-simple, about ten years ago, except for miles 0 to 7.3. At that time the Montour Railroad was only willing to give us a 16-foot easement for the first 7.3 miles. Duquesne Light already had purchased an easement through this section. When the property came up for sale originally out of bankruptcy court, we felt no need to pursue the property due to our existing easement. This arrangement was fine until January, 2000.

In the last months of 1999 the Hollow Oak Land Trust (HOLT) had been quietly negotiating to purchase the property.

Continued on page 4...

Montour Trail Development Report

by Dick Quasey

The Montour Trail bridge crossing PA 880 near Quicksilver was unofficially opened for hikers and bikers in mid-October. An official opening is postponed until Spring 2001, when the placing of trail surface material is expected to be completed from Bugay Drive (mile 11.5) to the bridge at Quicksilver (mile 14.5), providing a continuous 18 miles of Trail from PA 881 in Moon Township (aka Groveton) to Noblestown Road in Robinson Township (Washington County). In fact, Robinson Township has started putting down surface material immediately north of the bridge, and Findlay Township has recently completed surfacing between Bugay Drive and US 22. As soon as the subgrade is ready across the Bologna property at Champion, North Fayette Township will place surface material from US 22 to the County Line in the southern portion of the Bologna property.

Continued on page 7...
A while back, I promised our outgoing president, Dennis Pfeffer, that I would highlight some of our members' beneficial Trail experiences. I think it fits well with New Year resolutions.

Meet Myrna Huwe. Myrna is a Trail Patrol Monitor in the Moon/Rob area, and walks a total of 8 miles daily. On some particularly beautiful days, she will walk 14 miles or more without a hint of an ache! In inclement weather, (and it has to be VERY bad for her to forego the Trail), she uses her home treadmill and a stationary bike for exercise. She has gone through 5 bikes already, due to high-mileage wear and tear.

It's hard to believe that only 6 years ago, Myrna had a heart attack. At that same time, she was also diagnosed with high blood pressure and diabetes. Her doctor recommended that she start a fitness regimen that included a walking routine. At first, she could barely walk a half mile before sitting down to rest. Slowly, she gained strength, stamina, and better health. Now, after becoming a dedicated Trail walker, she no longer needs any heart medications, and has lost weight as well. Great going, Myrna!

Myrna's friend, Josephine Nappie, (an energetic lady, 75 years young), is also an avid daily Trail user. Not only does she walk 4 miles on weekdays, she works a fulltime job. On the weekends, however, she walks 8 miles with her friend. She does this to maintain the good health that she already has. WOW! What a testimony to the good health benefits of the Trail.

Thank you, lovely ladies, and may good health continue to be yours throughout the coming New Year!

I wish all of you a healthy, happy New Year!

Debby

Newsletter Deadline

All articles for the March/April Trail-Letter will be due no later than February 3, 2001. Please see Page 2 for submitting correspondence. Thank you.

Thanks!

The Montour Trail Council is an all volunteer organization founded in 1989 to convert the abandoned Montour Railroad right of way and the abandoned Peters Creek Branch of the Pennsylvania Railroad into a fifty-five mile recreational trail for non-motorized activity regardless of physical ability or financial wherewithal.
Calendar of Events

* New Year's Day – Jan. 1, 2001

* MTC board meeting — January 15, 2001. See listing below for time and place.

Friends' Meetings and Work Parties

♦ MTC Board Meeting, every third Monday of the month - 6:00 pm at Chartiers Valley High School, in the faculty lounge. Turn left off of the Kirwan Heights exit of I-79. Turn left at the next light, go under the Interstate, and the school is on your left. Call Peter at 412-854-1835 for more information or to get on the agenda.

♦ Cecil Events:
  - Friends of the Trail meeting, every fourth Tuesday of the month - at the Cecil American Legion, Rt. 50, at 7:00 pm. Call 412-257-2553 for more information.
  - Work & Clean-up party, every third Saturday of the month - 9:00 am. Meet at the Storage shed at Hendersenville. Call 412-257-2553 for more information.

♦ Moon/Robinson Events:
  - Friends of the Trail meeting, the Wednesday before the second Saturday of the month at 7:00 pm, at the Forest Grove Fire Department. Anyone from the communities of Moon and Robinson are encouraged to attend. Call 412-859-3020 for more information.
  - Work & Clean-up party, every second Saturday of the month - 9:00 am. Call 412-282-3748 for more information and location.

♦ Findlay/North Fayette Events:
  - Friends of the Trail, call Don at 724-899-3695 or Pete at 412-788-4136 for more information.
  - Work & Clean-up party, every fourth Saturday of the month - 9:00 am. Meet at the Enlow Ballfield. Call 412-788-4136 for more information.

♦ Bethel Park Events:
  - Friends of the Trail meeting, every first Tuesday of the month at 7:30 pm in the Bethel Park Municipal Building Council Chambers. Anyone interested in the Bethel Park Trail segment is encouraged to come. For Clifton Road Bridge Committee contact Peter Kohnke at 412-854-1835 for more information.
  - Work & Clean-up party, every second and fourth Saturday of the month - 8:30 am. Call Bob O'Connell at 412-833-6259 for location and information.

♦ South Hills Trailblazing:
  - Friends of the Trail Work & Clean-up party, last Saturday of every month. For more information call Paul McKeown at 412 835-6692.

♦ McDonald Events:
  - Friends of the Trail Work & Clean-up party, tentatively held on the first Saturday of every month. For more information, contact Ray Johnston at 724-356-2621.
Greetings to Montour Trail Council members and friends. As the year comes to an end, so does my year as President of the Montour Trail Council. It has been my pleasure to serve this outstanding organization. Personally this year has been very busy, interesting, exciting and rewarding. I continue to be impressed with the support that the Montour Trail Council receives in our goal of building this 55 mile trail system. Our membership base continues to grow as do our support from all facets of the public sector. This includes excellent support from the townships, counties, state, and the federal government. Our success in the future will continue to be dependent on these various bodies. Please thank individuals at these bodies for their support of the trail when possible. I also would like to thank the individual Montour Trail Council members, who willingly donate time and financial resources for this exciting project.

In January, Peter Kohnke will become the sixth President of the Montour Trail Council. Please join me in congratulating Peter and wishing him great success in leading us into the year 2001. Also congratulations are in order for the new vice-president, Bob Boyce. In addition, thanks are in order for the continued service of our secretary, Bruce Barron, and treasurer, Judy Thompson.

In summation, I would like to mention some of the diverse trail users enjoying the Montour Trail.
- In South Park Township I met a mother and her three sons aged 3, 5 and 7. All three of the boys had new bikes and were enthuised to be riding the new section of the trail built by the Turnpike Commission. The 3 year old was riding without training wheels, which the mother attributed to him being able to quickly learn on the flat riding surface of the trail.
- An individual I had met previously at a coffee shop in Moon Township told me how wonderful the trail has been for him. He walks up to three miles on the trail whenever he can. He has an artificial limb and has found the trail to be the only place viable for him to walk.
- And finally, I meet an avid bicyclist who is a manager at the Heinz Company out of Cincinnati, Ohio. He was in Pittsburgh for a two week training session. He purposely picked the Marriott Hotel in RIDC to stay. He then could ride his recumbent bike every day after the training sessions in downtown Pittsburgh. I believe this type of hotel usage should pick up significantly as more of the trail is completed.

Many of us in the Montour Trail Council have various reasons for volunteering. I receive the most satisfaction in meeting our diverse trail users and knowing that I have played a small role in making their Montour Trail experience an enjoyable one.

Happy Trails and best of luck and support to our new President, Peter.

MTC purchase...
...continued from page 1

The Montour Trail Council has an excellent working relationship with HOLT and we supported them in their pursuit of the property. Well the HOLT organization is involved with preserving some other very substantial properties and decided in December of 1999 not to pursue this acquisition. The option on the property expired in January of 2000. In the back of our minds we thought no one else would want to purchase this property. We were shocked into reality in early January.

An individual representing a general contractor took a 45 day option on the property. We actually thought that the property in the Montour Run corridor was lost forever. However, the Montour Trail Council decided not to wait and went into action. We had zero dollars for this acquisition, but we were able to put together a financial plan in a short time for $200,000 (An additional $15,000 was required for legal, survey, and transfer fees.) HOLT had a DCNR 50/50 match land trust grant of $100,000, that they would be willing to transfer. However, the MTC, not being a land trust, could not directly accept the grant. Thus a letter was sent to the ALT asking them to assist us with the acquisition. The ALT board voted to purchase the property and accept the grant transfer. A request for $100,000 was then submitted to the Allegheny County Regional Asset District (RAD) board to match the DCNR grant. (On 11/29/2000 we were awarded $99,000 by the RAD board.) However, due to the urgency of purchasing the property quickly, the MTC decided to pursue an additional temporary funding avenue. A request was sent to the Allegheny Trail Alliance (ATA) for a swing loan of $200,000. The ATA not only agreed to lend the MTC the money, but provided it interest free for 90 days. Thus the financial plan had been put in place, but we had one serious problem. The general contractor kept renewing his option on the property. A renewal occurred in late February, another in April, and then another in July. This process was very frustrating to us. Especially, since for legal reasons, we could not publicly comment on the situation. Finally, in late August, the other respective buyer let his option on the property expire.

The MTC quickly sent a purchase offer to the Montour Railroad. The sales agreement was signed on 9/7/2000, the bankruptcy court approved the offer on 10/27/2000, and the acquisition was final on

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WELCOME
NEW MEMBERS

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<th>Membership Chairman</th>
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<td>Joseph Abraham</td>
<td>Diane Merrill</td>
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<td>Craig R. Allison</td>
<td>Esther &amp; Fred Miller</td>
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<td>Christine C. Bookmyer</td>
<td>Dave O'Neil</td>
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<td>The Butlers</td>
<td>Elizabeth &amp; Thomas</td>
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<td>Bill Englert</td>
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<td>Palma F. Fender</td>
<td>Bridgeville</td>
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<td>Edward H. Frohnapfel</td>
<td>F. Phil Ruscillo</td>
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<td>Peter &amp; Theanne</td>
<td>Anne Siegel</td>
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<td>Gagianas</td>
<td>Bob Sutton</td>
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<td>Nancy Gillette</td>
<td>Andrew C. Van Gorder</td>
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<td>John Giovengo</td>
<td>Mr. &amp; Mrs. J. S. Walsh</td>
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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 for when we apply for grants.

BENEFACTORS

Dennis Pfeiffer
David & Carol Eibling
Mackin Engineering Company
Bob & Maryanne Purdy

LEADERS CIRCLE

Peter Stangert
Lou Steinmiller
Rotary Club of Bridgeville

Thank You!

MTC purchase...

...continued from page 4

11/22/2000. We have some work ahead of us in transferring the property to the ALT and establishing a management agreement with them. But, we now have been able to preserve this precious beautiful property for all current and future Montour Trail users.

I would like to thank the following individuals and organizations for their help in making this acquisition possible:

- Dick Wilson - MTC's Legal Counsel; Fred Owen - DCNR; Susan Gold & Andy Loza - ALT; Steve Schotting & Janet Thorne - HOLT; Linda Boxx - ATA; Allegheny County RAD Board; Stan Sattinger - MTC Board Member.

In summation, I would like to especially thank Dick Wilson, who expertly led us through this arduous process. Finally, thanks to the MTC Board whose guidance, patience, and support was substantial. What a joy it has been to work with such a dedicated, giving, and fun-loving group of individuals.

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/SENIORS $15
☐ INDIVIDUAL $25
☐ FAMILY $35
☐ SUPPORTING $50
☐ SUSTAINING $100
☐ BENEFACCTOR $250
☐ LEADERS CIRCLE $500 + 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 (daytime) ______ (evening) ______
E-MAIL ______________________________

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.

DON'T FORGET! The Montour Trail Council may be designated as your United Way Contributor Choice option #3308, or Combined Federal Campaign Contributor Choice option #9308, where you work.

Please fill out this application and return it with your check to:
MONTOUR TRAIL COUNCIL
P.O. BOX 11866
PITTSBURGH PA. 15228-0866
Watershed Group receives grant to protect Montour Run stream banks

by Stan Sattinger

The newly incorporated Montour Run Watershed Association (MRWA) will receive a $62,800 grant to install carbonate rock linings to protect the banks of Montour Run against erosion due to the increased runoff of storm water while helping neutralize acid from abandoned mine drainage.

The grant award was presented at a special ceremony during the MRWA-sponsored "stream walk" held on November 4 to identify undiscovered abandoned mine drainage sites within the watershed. The presentation was made by the Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) Deputy Secretary for Mineral Resources Management, Robert Dolence and Pennsylvania Legislative Representative, John Pippy.

Taking on active roles as partners with the MRWA in this project will be the Department of Engineering and Construction of Allegheny County and the Natural Resources Conservation Service of the U.S. Department of Agriculture. "This project will have a beneficial impact on the Montour Trail," said County engineer and MTC Board member Dave Wright. "We will be stabilizing sections of stream bank where erosion is actually beginning to undermine the wearing surface of the Trail."

Stream bank erosion is one of the most common and recurring problems throughout the 37-square-mile Montour Run Watershed. Particularly heavy scouring is occurring in numerous short sections of the banks along the main trunk of Montour Run. This scouring produces siltation in the stream channel, which reduces its storm-water-holding capacity. The potential for flash flooding has increased over the last few years, and there have been adverse effects on fish and other aquatic life. With proper measures taken to clean up mine discharges and reduce siltation, Montour Run has high potential as a habitat for trout and other sport fishing.

The scope of work for this project will include permitting and other engineering prerequisites, followed by the placement of 830 linear feet of rip-rap stone in revetments at ten designated sites along the main trunk of Montour Run. These sites are located in Moon, Robinson, and Findlay Townships. Placement of the stone will be preceded by the installation of a layer of geotextile filter fabric. All work should be completed within a twelve-month period.

The grant is being funded through the "Reclaim PA" program of the Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection (DEP). Reclaim PA consists of: legislative, policy and management initiatives to increase abandoned mine reclamation and acid mine drainage abatement by volunteers; the active mining industry; and the DEP. Reclaim PA stresses a watershed approach to cleaning up pollution from past mining practices.

Scouts to the Rescue on South Park Trail

by Dr. Joe Rudolph

During the winter of 1999, vandals again struck the South Park Township section of the Montour Trail. Trail control gates were removed from the ground and thrown to the side of the trail.

This summer, Daniel Prokop of Elizabeth Township devoted his Eagle Scout project to repairing and rehabilitating the trail. He organized his troop members to replace and repaint the gates. The gates were secured with concrete.

The troop then removed all trash from the sides of the trail, cut the grass and removed brush. Now the trail looks good as new thanks to Dan and his troop.

Dan, his parents, and troop members were recognized for their special contribution at the annual meeting of the MTC.
MTC's Annual Dinner Meeting highlights

by Bruce Barron

There were almost too many accomplishments to fit into one message as outgoing Montour Trail Council president, Dennis Pfeiffer, presented his "State of the Trail" report at the MTC's annual dinner meeting on November 5.

An impressive turnout of 75 trail enthusiasts enjoyed an excellent buffet dinner at the Findlay Township Community Center while Pfeiffer breezed through 20 highlights of the year 2000.

The biggest applause was saved for the volunteer crew that planned, supervised, and carried out installation of the Quicksilver Bridge that now carries the Montour Trail over Route 980. Past MTC president Dick Quasey told the amazing story of the project's completion, recalling that after he described the Quicksilver situation at the 1999 annual meeting, retired engineer Jack Peth approached him and said, "I'd like to help and I'll tell you what to do."

Peth followed through on his offer by managing a 14-member team of regular volunteers. Quasey joked that the volunteers become known as the "Hey Jack" group, "because nobody would do anything unless Jack was there to tell them what to do."

Quasey praised Greg Orient of J. F. Orient Inc., who completed excavation for the bridge abutments with precise accuracy and at no cost to the trail. He also presented a professional-quality video on the bridge construction, created by MTC member and Fort Cherry High School teacher, Ford Shankle. Quasey thanked Robinson Township (Washington County) and McDonald Borough for their assistance as well.

Quasey estimated that the contributions of volunteer time and professional service involved in the Quicksilver Bridge project saved the MTC $190,000.

Pfeiffer noted other achievements that made 2000 an excellent year for the MTC, such as:

—the completion (with MTC assistance) of substantial Panhandle Trail mileage in Allegheny County;
—the opening of new trail segments in Bethel Park, Jefferson Hills and South Park;
—the lighting of the Enlow Tunnel (completed by Findlay Township);
—the acquisition of land along miles 0 to 7.3, preventing developments adverse to the trail; and
—an extremely successful MTC-IKEA race, which generated $8,000 in revenues for the trail.

MT Development

...continued from page 1

Design and engineering for the uncompromised sections of the Montour Trail in Washington County should be completed in April 2001. Construction can then be planned and scheduled for the McDonald trestle bridge in Robinson Township, the Trail in Mount Pleasant, and the Morganza Road crossing in Cecil Township. Construction plans for work in Peters Township ought to be available in May or early June 2001. Montour Trail projects in Washington County will be 80% funded by Federal TEA-21 allotments.

Similarly, design and engineering is underway for the uncompromised sections of Trail in southeast Allegheny County and some projects there are expected to be under construction by April, 2001. This work is also 80% funded under the Federal ISTEA program.

Friends of the Trail associations have been organized as sections of the Trail were constructed in the neighboring municipalities to support local interest in the further improvement of the Trail and promote assistance in its operation. This practice will continue as other Trail sections are finished.

More detailed information will be available at public meetings which will be held in various municipalities this winter.
Pushing for the Finish

by Bruce Barron

With the goal of a completed trail in sight, the Montour Trail Council is seeking to build support for an ambitious effort to finish the job.

Having gained wide recognition as one of southwestern Pennsylvania's most valuable recreational assets, the Montour Trail has received government grants to complete several sections of trail now under development. But funds are still needed for other sections, such as the segment in Peters Township west of Route 19.

In addition, some right-of-way acquisition will still be necessary, and the Montour Trail Council must construct new parking areas and secure equipment to maintain the whole trail.

The remaining needs add up to an estimated $2-3 million. That may sound frightening, but it's definitely achievable, as the MTC board was reminded recently when a business located near the trail tracked us down — before we even knew they existed — to offer a sizable donation.

We believe that many more individuals and businesses would be happy to make a contribution toward completing the Montour Trail. Tasteful forms of recognition (such as "adopt-a-mile" acknowledgments similar to the Pennsylvania Department of Transportation's adopt-a-highway program) should help to make supporting the Montour Trail a better deal for corporate sponsors.

The MTC has just produced a colorful, eight-page booklet explaining why the Montour Trail is worth supporting. Board members will be contacting local foundation, civic, and corporate leaders to explain our plans and ask for their assistance. You can help too by telling us about persons who you believe might respond favorably to a presentation about the Montour Trail.

Please contact fundraising chairperson, Bruce Barron at (412) 561-3833 or MTC President, Peter Kohnke at (412) 854-1835 with your ideas and to suggest prospective supporters whom we should contact. To get a copy of the new MTC presentation booklet, call our general line at (412) 831-2030.

And of course, please don't forget to keep your MTC membership current and to encourage your friends to become members of the Montour Trail. Each member's contribution helps to keep our existing trail mileage in good shape and brings us a little bit closer to that long-awaited goal of an uninterrupted trail from Coraopolis to Clairton.