Hurricane Ivan Ravages Montour Trail: Estimates predict over $500,000 in damages

On September 17, 2004, floodwaters from the remnants of Hurricane Ivan heavily damaged several miles of the Montour Trail, forcing the closing of the first 9 miles of the Montour Trail's 39 completed trail miles in Allegheny and Washington Counties. Photos show some of the damage and the repair efforts that we now face.

Volunteer crews spent the weekend following the flooding assessing damage to the trail. The worst devastation occurred in the lower sections along the Trail's namesake Montour Run. In Moon, Robinson, and Findlay Townships numerous washouts of several feet deep extend for hundreds of yards. Fortunately, all of the bridges survived, but several cannot be crossed due to large washouts adjacent to them.

Because Hurricane Ivan did monstrous damage in the Airport-area section of the Trail, it will take a combination of heavy machine work and manual volunteer work to restore this section to recreational use. We have been gearing up to attack the damage on both fronts as quickly as possible.

The MTC has been inundated with offers of volunteer help, and we are doing our best to utilize those offers. A number of firms have contacted us offering a Day of Caring or other company-sponsored volunteer work session.

"Numerous offers of help have been received from volunteers," said Dennis Pfeiffer, President of the Montour Trail Council. "Information on volunteer work parties will be posted on the trail Web site (www.montourtrail.org). Also, monetary donations can be sent to the Montour Trail Council at 304 Hickman St., Suite #3, Bridgeville, PA 15017."

Whether as individuals or with firms, the people who are offering these services are truly passionate about getting the Trail back in condition.

The first volunteer work session was launched with a strong showing on October 2. Twenty volunteers dispatched five truckloads of trash from the vicinity of the Cliff Mine parking lot, improving
Many of you, no doubt, are what I would call "major trail users," in that you regularly take in all of our approximately 40 miles of completed Trail. Particularly among biking enthusiasts, a nice 10-mile ride is not out of the question on a fine autumn day. For those of us who prefer to hike rather than bike, however, we usually stick to our "old haunts."

I definitely fall into the latter category, so I rarely make it off the Bethel Park/Peters sections of Trail. This summer I resolved to change that and to take in as many different "spurs" of the Montour as I could. So, many days had me driving before walking, one or two children in tow, along with several bottles of water, a packed lunch, and either a stroller to push or a carrier strapped to my back.

The effort was well worth it! I saw quiet wonders and dodged racing roller bladers; I met exercisers and families at play. I never regretted the hours I spent walking, and although I didn't take in our entire Trail, I did see most of its sections. It gave me a chance to truly appreciate what ten years' hard work can accomplish. In retrospect, I took in our finished Trail just in the nick of time.

There's a joke that goes, "If you want to make God laugh, tell him your plans." Well, on September 17, many years of volunteer labor were literally washed away. Major sections of the Montour Trail were shut down in the aftermath of Hurricane Ivan and the flooding that destroyed homes, businesses and our beloved Trail. We had to immediately close ten miles of Trail starting at Mile 0. It has been a heartbreaking experience for all of us who helped build the Trail and the rest of us who enjoy using it.

But out of the flood waters springs much hope. We have had an outpouring (no pun intended) of new volunteer help, and many of you have already made monetary donations to help us rebuild. Some sections of Trail have already reopened as a result.

Ironically, we were just in the process of formalizing details to establish the Montour Trail Endowment Fund to provide for just such emergencies. While we are accepting funds for the Endowment, our immediate priority is the nearly half-million dollars we need to repair the damage wrought by Hurricane Ivan.

You can help us by making a year-end, tax-deductible donation that can go either to the flood relief, to the endowment, or simply to the MTC as we continue in our efforts to build trail throughout the area. We are now accepting credit card payments on our Web site (www.montourtrail.org) and some of you have been particularly generous with your online donations.

The men and women of the MTC are a bit like the bionic man: We will be better and stronger as a result of this tragedy. For those of you who lost property during the flooding, our prayers go out to you and we hope you are soon feeling better and stronger, as well. As we come into the holiday season, all of us need to remember that there is always good that comes from bad. Together we can realize it.

Happy Trails, Happy Holidays, and God Bless!

Astrid Cook
Friends’ Meetings and Work Parties

- MTC Board Meeting, every third Monday of the month - 6:00 p.m. at 304 Hickman St., Suite 3, Bridgeville, PA. Turn right off of the Bridgeville exit of I-79. Turn left at the next light, go straight at next light and make left turn onto Hickman St. just after the Post Office. Call Peter at 412-854-1835 for more information or to get on the agenda.

- Cecil Events:
  Friends of the Trail meeting, every fourth Wednesday of the month at 7:00 p.m. From May-August, meetings are held at the Kunick Access area along the trail off Cecil-Henderson Road; other months meet at the MTC Offices, Call 412-257-2553 for more information. Work & Clean-up party, every third Saturday of the month - 9:00 am. (Subject to change; check information boards.) Meet at the Storage shed at Hendersonville. Call 412-257-2553 for more info.

- Moon/Robinson Events:
  Friends of the Trail meeting, the Wednesday before the second Saturday of the month at 7:00 p.m., 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 412-262-3748 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 p.m. 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 meetings, 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. All volunteers are welcome. For more information, call Paul McKeown at 412-835-6692.

- Fort Cherry Events:
  Friends of the Trail Meeting, first Wednesday of the month at McDonald Borough Bldg., Council chambers at 7:00 p.m. Work & Clean-up parties, scheduled as needed. For more information, contact John Wasko at 724-796-3781, or Joe Seibel at 724-693-2523.

- Peters Township Events:
  Friends of the Trail Meeting, first Monday of the month at Peters Township Parks and Recreation Community Room at 7:45 p.m. For more information on Work & Clean-up parties, please contact Mark Imgrund at 724-941-6351 or by e-mail at meimgrund@adelphia.net.

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November 2004

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Calendar of Events

- Annual Dinner—November 14
- MTC Board Meeting—November 15
- IKEA Tree Sale—December 9, 10, 11, 12
- MTC Board Meeting—December 20

For updated information, check out our new Events Calendar at www.montourtrail.org/events
2nd Annual Tour the Montour a Success!

Despite the flood damage to the trail a week before the start of the 2nd Annual Fisher Scientific Tour the Montour Trail Ride, the ride went off without a hitch. The weather was perfect with cooler temperatures and slightly overcast skies, which made for beautiful riding weather.

The starting location of the ride had to be moved to the Boggs trail head due to the extensive damage at mile “0” and most of the trail to Boggs. Montour Trail volunteer work crews spent the week repairing minor washouts from Boggs to Hendersonville, where the turnaround was for the long ride. Some additional work had to be done at the trail head to accommodate the number of parking spaces that would be required. Special thanks go to Frank Ludwin who transformed the Boggs area into a nice parking area for the ride.

The altered starting location provided an opportunity for many riders to ride on a different part of the trail that they are not accustomed to. Many cyclists enjoyed their first trip through the National Tunnel on the Cecil section of the trail. Others took their first ride across the McDonald Trestle. Everyone enjoyed the scenery and stopped to tell our volunteers so at one of our 4 rest stops along the journey. While at the rest stops, riders filled up on oranges, bananas and PowerAde.

Upon return, riders were treated to rigatoni and meatballs by Jabby Joe's Restaurant, and also to sandwiches and ice cream courtesy of King's Family Restaurants. All riders were eligible for prizes courtesy of various businesses. In total, more than 30 prizes were given out to the riders.

A special thanks to all the event sponsors: Fisher Scientific, Coca Cola, Chairman of the Boards, Park West Supply, Signal Graphics, Jabby Joe’s Restaurant, Kings Family Foods, Hess Physical Therapy, Shaffer’s Pizza-Bakery, and Coraopolis Bike & Hobby. Also thanks to St. Columbkille Church in Imperial who loaned us the chairs for the event.

One-hundred, seventy participants registered for the ride this year and that was nearly double the participants last year. The event raised over $5,000 for the trail and the proceeds will be used for the maintenance and expansion of the trail. Thanks to everyone who came out and enjoyed a day on the Montour Trail, and we will see you next year at the Third Annual Tour the Montour!

Bill Orr

Trail Restoration Creates Opportunities

Continued from page 1

the appearance of the site and exposing a substantial pile of displaced ballast that will be reusable for filling in some of the huge washouts that occurred. On October 9 at the Beaver Grade Road crossing we recovered over 200 reusable pieces of split-rail fencing and posts, originally worth more than $2,000, and we rescued a picnic table and leased port-a-pot that had been swept away.

Our engineers' current damage estimate is $475,000 for the first 6 1/2 miles. Another $100,000 is needed for fencing and signs. Possible funding sources are currently being reviewed. Our gracious thanks go out to the community for the many offers of help.

These work sessions are held on Saturdays beginning at 9 a.m. and will be continued until cold weather sets in. Many of the people taking part are Trail users who have never before been involved in volunteer work or the Trail.

Besides trash removal, our current needs include volunteers to do rake and shovel work to reclaim fill material and make minor surface repairs. As time passes, we will need people to reinstall split-rail fencing, plant grass seed, etc. We are also looking for “professional” volunteer assistance, including public relations and funding appeals, hydrological assessments, and historical documentation of exposed railway and other artifacts.

If you wish to offer your services in any of these areas, please e-mail us at MontourTrailHelp@yahoo.com, or call 724-926-1449 and leave a message. We will notify you of work session times and places after we have added your name to our database.

Bruce Barron, Mark Imgrund, Laura Orr and Stan Sattinger all contributed to this article.

MTC Website Now Accepts PayPal

The Montour Trail Council’s website (montourtrail.org) now accepts PayPal payment for MTC memberships and renewals as well as special donations, such as those for the recent flooding recovery. If you’re the type who likes to do things electronically, get online and have a look. In the future, keep your eyes open for other uses for PayPal, such as the ability to purchase MTC logo merchandise on the website.

Mark Imgrund
Hello members and friends of the Montour Trail.

Of course the aftermath of Hurricane Ivan is still with us, leaving nearly five miles of trail closed. Thanks to all of you for your help, both physically and monetarily. Special thanks are in order to board member Stan Sattinger for organizing our volunteer cleanup efforts. Also, thanks to Dave Wright who estimated the cost of damages, received permission from the Allegheny County RAD board to transfer $25,000 for flood repair, and submitted a grant request to the DCNR for additional funds.

In lieu of the normal Prez column, it seemed appropriate to include here a summary by Bob Bolding about a volunteer effort on October 12th by our trail neighbor GlaxoSmithKline.

Dennis Pfeiffer

In his own words: Bob Bolding Senior Research Manager, Oral Care Brands

GlaxoSmithKline Consumer Healthcare
1000 GSK Drive
Moon Township, PA 15108

Successful Clean-up: Montour Trail at GSK

Among the casualties of the September 17th floods was the Montour Trail. Nine miles of this public rail-trail was closed after Montour Run surged to a crest of 16 feet that day. The flood scouried the trail’s crushed limestone surface and cut deep ruts into the rail bed itself. The flood flowed straight through the railroad cut at Coketown Road (MP 0.3) instead of turning sharply right to follow the stream. Also, 5 bridges (Hassam Road, Beaver Grade Road, MP 4.4, Hookstown Grade Road/Trout Run and at the Parkway West/McClaren Run bridge) obstructed flow and flood water scouried nearby railroad fill. It also left all manner of trash and debris in its wake.

Part of the trail runs by GSK at the foot of the hill below our office. This portion of trail is a favorite exercise destination for our employees during lunch and after-hours.

Reconstruction timing for the trail is not certain. The trail is owned by the non-profit Montour Trail Council—an all volunteer organization which has built the trail foot by foot over a 30-mile span around the western and southern hills of the Pittsburgh area. While the group has filed an application for rebuilding funds from FEMA, no one knows if money will be forthcoming or on what timing. In the meantime, GSK employees—like thousands of Pittsburghers—are missing their trail.

On our October 12 Day of Caring, 15 GSK employees did their part to help rehabilitate the trail. With the help of the Montour Trail Council’s leadership (Dennis Pfeiffer, President; Stan Sattinger, Director of volunteers; and Jerry Bates), we put in 65 hours of volunteer effort to clean up the area of trail downstream from the Park Manor-Montour Run Road intersection.

Accomplishments

• Picked up, removed, and disposed of at a local landfill more than 5,000 pounds of refuse from the trail site.
• Swept out the public Gazebo and removed unsightly debris from the trail fencing.
• Salvaged thousands of pounds of rail bed foundation stone deposited in the vegetation along the creek bank.
• Filled in several large ruts in the trail.
• Salvaged crushed limestone which had been washed off the trail surface and returned it to the trail bed.
• Recovered a bike rack and manhole cover from the creek below and re-placed them at the trail site.
• Excavated and returned to function a drainage pipe between the road and trail bed.

Next Steps

1) A big thanks to the GSK crew. Rome wasn’t built in a day—and the Montour Trail won’t be reconstructed overnight. However, with bent backs, rakes, shovels, a couple of wheel-barrows and the sweat of our brow, GSKrs did our part to begin the long process of putting it all back together.

2) Thanks to members of the Montour Trail Council—Dennis, Stan, and Jerry—who took time off from their day-jobs to lead us. Note: if any of you rode with Dennis to the local landfill to unload that rickety old truck—my hat’s off to you. Yuk!

3) Final accounting for people and hours volunteered. OK, I’ll admit it: My record-keeping fell apart that afternoon, and I’m embarrassed to say I don’t have everybody’s name and time. Please help me out by helping me account for everybody there and whether they/you were there for morning shift, afternoon shift, or both.

My records show the following names and hours:

Bob Bolding 6; Andy Popko 6; Mary Dellecave 6; Bob Lioi 6; John Hankins 6; Mike Verplank 6; Alan Schaefer 3; Mike Quail 6; Lynne Lescott 6; Adrienne McFee; Sally Palko; Pat Malone; Joyce Warner; Denise Carlson; Cheryl J Tokay; Michael P Tokarczyk.
Sept. 11th IKEA/ Montour Trail ½ Marathon and 5K Run / Walk Another Success Despite Race Interruption

The 2004 IKEA-Montour Trail 1/2 Marathon and 5K Run and Walk had another successful year with 1060 registered. This year's total of registered participants was a little below last year's of 1250, but this was the third year with over 1000. The final accounting isn't complete but it appears that will be another good year.

This year's event winners for the ½ Marathon were: Men: 1st Michael Rossi, 2nd Eric Anish, 3rd John Brockenbrough, Women: 1st Place Mary Alico, 2nd Collen Harrison, 3rd Beth Parker. This year's winners for the 5K Run were: Men: 1st James Smoliga, 2nd Eric Shafer, 3rd Charles Buechel, Women: 1st Laura Kaulen, 2nd Sarah Pratte, 3rd Penny Pelger. Congratulations to all of the age group winners and everyone who came to run in the event.

The preparation for the event required more effort than usual because of the rainy summer. Heavy rains not only fueled the growth plant life along the trail, but also washed away 300 feet of the trail surface near the Cliffmine Parking area. Special thanks to Findlay Township for resurfacing the washed out sections of trail and to Moon Township for mowing sections of the trail along the course. In addition special thanks to our volunteers led by trail President Dennis Pfeiffer and Peter Merrther spent weeks grooming the trail for this year's event.

The washed out sections of trail were the result of Montour Creek flooding the trail during a heavy rainstorm on August 23rd. During that rain storm the stream gauge near Wicks which can be viewed on the USGS Web site on the Internet was reading over 8 feet of water depth. Everyone was holding their breath during another heavy rainstorm on Sept. 8th. There were concerns that another flood could again damage sections of the course. As luck would have it the stream crested that night just below flood stage and the event day weather turned out perfect.

We did have one glitch during the event when the ½ Marathon had to be stopped because a car collided with a power pole near the Enlow ball field. The Findlay Township Police shut down the course because of safety concerns about the damaged pole. We deeply regret that 41 runners were unable to complete the course because of the accident, but course safety was the first consideration for the decision to shut down the course. Our trail guards under the direction of Dennis Sims did an excellent job of handling this interruption. A.J. Myers buses picked up the stranded runners and returned them to the IKEA lot.

This is the 9th year the trail has partnered with IKEA on this event. The MTC extend special thanks to Jennifer Murdock of IKEA public relations and all of the IKEA volunteers their generous help and cooperation on this year's event. Their efforts made this year's event a lot easier. The race registration area looked like a first class outdoor office because Jennifer found some spare desks and tables and had them moved to the tent.

Special thanks to all of our sponsors: Coca Cola, Comcast, Aj Myers, Dick's Sporting Goods, Computer Associates, The Mall at Robinson, Robinson Town Center, Eagle Therapy, Interstate Communications, Swindell Dressler, North Park Clubhouse, Salvation Army, Great Harvest Bread Co., and Metso Minerals.

Special thanks to all of the emergency services provided for the event, which were as always excellent. Northwest EMS, Robinson EMS and Valley EMS provided the emergency medical services. The Findlay, Moon, North Fayette and Robinson Townships Police departments handled the traffic control and all did a fantastic great job.

The race registration was a seamless operation this year without lines thanks to the hard work and planning of our race registrar Laura Orr. Because of her great job we are now calling her our Assistant Race Director/Registrar.

Special thanks to the Boy Scouts of America for helping to man our water stations and Sacred Heart School Cross Country team from Coraopolis for helping with the split timing.

Last but certainly not least, special thanks to all of the Montour Trail Volunteers who came through again in support of this year's event.

Jess Forquer

"IKEA Christmas Tree Sale" on December 9th, 10th, 11th & 12th

Let the Montour Trail be the first to wish you a Happy Holiday Season and invite you to take part as a volunteer for the annual IKEA Christmas Tree Sale at Robinson Town Center.

Our volunteers, who wrap and cut the trees, have always had a good time working this event. So come and join in the fun and help the Montour Trail.

Volunteers will receive a free tree, a meal ticket for the IKEA restaurant, and a ticket for the IKEA raffle. IKEA has provided some nice prizes to past winners. IKEA tells me that the tree sale area is going to be moved closer to the building this year. So come on and sign up early!

The proceeds from this work go directly to the trail. If you would like to work with us by volunteering for this event please e-mail me at jforquer@adelphia.net or for more info call Jess Forquer before 10:00 PM at 412 859-3737.

Volunteers can work on Thursday and Friday (12/9/10) from 10 a.m. to 9 p.m.; Saturday (12/11) from 9 a.m. to 9 p.m.; Sunday (12/12) from 10 a.m. to 8 p.m.
Welcome New Members

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 we apply for grants.

NEW MEMBERS

Gina Armenini  
Richard Blaskiewicz  
Mary Butler  
Janice E. DeJulio  
Catherine Drotar  
Carl Fossom  
Richard Grabowski  
Susan Hockenberry  
Donna Hoffman & Richard Dum  
Robert Hoover  
Leroy Johnston  
Bob & Anita Kornsisky  
Joe & Norma Kotarba  
Dan & Sylvia Leland  
David Pitts  
Jim & Brenda Quasey  
Anthony Ranalli

Karen & Jim Robbins  
Richard Rojcewicz  
Laura Tocci  
Laura Willumsen  
Sharon K. Wirtz, VMD  
Jessica Zozos

BENEFACCTORS

Aldo Angelo  
Roger C. DuBois  
Dev Earl Lemster  
Richard Orr

LEADER'S CIRCLE

Jim & Brenda Quasey  
Gwen & Jeff Steigerwalt

Membership Chair - Jerry Agin

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.

STUDENT / SENIORS $15
INDIVIDUAL $25
FAMILY $35
SUPPORTING $50
SUSTAINING $100
BENEFACCTOR $250
LEADERS CIRCLE $500 + up

- I wish to become a member of the Montour Trail Council.  
(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 toll-free, 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 11666  
PITTSBURGH PA. 15228-0866

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.

Help Restore the Montour Trail

Floodwaters from the remnants of Hurricane Ivan have heavily damaged several miles of the Montour Trail, one of western Pennsylvania's most heavily used recreational resources. The first 9 miles of Montour Trail's 39 completed trail miles in Allegheny and Washington Counties suffered quite a blow, requiring closure of the trail in that area. Some sense of the destruction can be seen in the above photos taken the day after the flood.

You can help!

Tax-deductible monetary donations to help rebuild and reopen the damaged areas of the trail can be sent to:

The Montour Trail Council  
304 Hickman Street, Ste. 3  
Bridgeville, PA 15017

or by using PayPal on the trail Web site (www.montourtrail.org). Information about volunteer work parties and updates on the closings will also be posted on the trail Web site.
Annual Dinner to Take Place November 14

The Montour Trail Council's annual dinner will take place on Sunday, November 14 beginning at 5 p.m. at the Neville Island Sports Complex restaurant on Neville Island.

Robert Morris College, which now manages the Neville Island facilities, is very interested in becoming more active in our Trail growth and the river view should make for a delightful evening.

Invitations for the dinner, along with a ballot for next year's MTC officers, should be mailed to MTC members shortly.