It’s Raining Volunteers: Multiple Projects Benefit from Increased Volunteer Efforts

MANY TRAIL USERS AMONG FLOOD RESTORATION VOLUNTEERS

We won’t forget for a long time the enormous damage inflicted by Hurricane Ivan on the Airport-area section of the Montour Trail on September 17 of this year. On six successive Saturdays beginning on October 2, dedicated volunteers undertook the first manual labor tasks required to restore this section of the Trail to recreational use. These efforts included removing debris deposited by the flood waters at trail side and reclaiming flood-displaced ballast stone for reuse in filling the huge washouts that had occurred.

Centered mainly on the Cliff Mine parking lot, the debris removal generated twelve truckloads of rubble that were generously accepted by the BFI landfill at Boggs without charge to the MTC. This debris removal extended over a two-mile length of the Trail. The ballast we scooped from the edges of the parking lot using our tractors and hand shovels filled deep trenches in the trail bed nearby, enabling our trucks to travel over the Trail right-of-way for follow-on restoration work. In addition, we recovered hundreds of fence posts and rails valued at $10 apiece near the Beaver Grade Road crossing and at other locations.

A total of 415 labor hours were given by 55 people in the Saturday sessions, about two-thirds of whom were first-time Trail volunteers. In addition, employees of Glaxo SmithKline contributed an additional 69 labor hours in a mid-week, company-sponsored, Day of Caring volunteer work session devoted to trail side cleanup at the bottom of Park Manor Drive. The MTC appreciates the contributions made by all of these people.

Those volunteers who contributed 10 hours or more of their time to this flood restoration effort include: Jerry Bates, Rich Blaskiewicz, Jesse Forquer, Carl Haney, Susan Hyre, Frank Koppel, Jonathan Koppel, Carolyn Lake, Thomas Lorenzi, Pete Merther, Dave Murphy, Dennis Pfeiffer, Stan Sattinger, Jonathan Shomody, and Greg Walz.

A great deal of heavy machine work for the placement of stone and other trail rebuilding operations will be taking place in the coming months. Following the heavy machine work, additional volunteer sessions will be needed for the reinstallation of fencing, planting of grass seed, and other manual labor tasks. If you wish to offer your services in future tasks of the flood restoration, please e-mail us at MontourTrailHelp@yahoo.com as spring approaches.

Stan Satttinger
Read on for more Volunteer Help Stories...
Montour Trail Council
Board of Directors
Dennis Pfeiffer  President
Mark Imgrund  Vice President
Astrid Cook  Secretary
Judy Thompson  Treasurer
Bill Capp  Bill Orr
Jesse Forquer  David Oyler
Hoyt Hall  Stan Sattinger
John Hooton  Ned Williams
Peter Kohnke  Dick Wilson
Frank Ludwin

Montour Trail Letter
Is published bi-monthly January through December. All correspondence should be
addressed to:
Montour Trail Letter
304 Hickman Street
Bridgeville, PA 15017
Or E-mail to:
newsletter@montourtrail.org

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.

Newsletter Deadline
All articles for the January / February Trail-Letter will be due no later than February 1, 2005
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 Kurnick 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 a.m. (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 a.m. 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 a.m. 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 a.m. Call Bob O’Connell at 412-833-6269 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 mcimgrund@adolphia.net.

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Bettis Laboratory Announces Community Service Award Winners

Bettel Bettis, Inc., operator of the Bettis Laboratory in West Mifflin, Pennsylvania, has selected Paul McKeown as one of four employees to receive their 2003-2004 Community Service Awards.

Bettel Bettis Community Service Awards recognize employees who make outstanding volunteer service contributions to their communities.

Selection is based on the significance of the activity to the community, the effectiveness of the employee’s personal contribution, the time and effort expended and the length of service in the activity. Each recipient was presented a plaque to honor their outstanding community service, and a grant of $500 will be made to a tax-exempt non-profit organization of the awardee’s choosing.

Paul McKeown of Upper St. Clair, PA has been a member of the Montour Trail Council since 1990, serving on the Board of directors, the Engineering and Construction Committee, and as a volunteer coordinator for the South Hills Area. Paul utilizes his 25 years of engineering experience to oversee preparation of environmental impact studies, negotiating rights-of-ways, and overseeing of designs for bridge trestles and decking. He has spent countless hours clearing trail paths, installing decks and fencing and a myriad of other tasks to convert 47 miles of railroad right of way to pedestrian and bicycle trails. Paul has designated the Montour Trail Council to receive his $500 Bettel grant in support of the construction and maintenance of the Montour Trail.

The Bettis Laboratory conducts research for the Naval Nuclear Propulsion Program. The laboratory is operated by Bettel Bettis, Inc. for the U.S. Department of Energy. Bettis employs over 2,000 people locally, and operates a facility in Idaho Falls, Idaho, and supports a facility in Charleston, South Carolina.
Fall normally brings a slowdown in trail traffic and Montour Trail Council activities. However, the MTC has had one of the busiest falls ever. The MTC's Engineering & Construction Committee has been working diligently with Mackin Engineering and PENNDOT on various MTC projects. This hard work has produced another project ready for construction. The federally funded new Muse-Bishop Road Bridge has now gone out for bids. The new bridge will be a 190-ft steel girders structure over Muse-Bishop Road near trail mile 24. This new bridge will replace a 1913 concrete arch structure at the same location. The concrete arch was deemed unsafe by the PUC (Public Utility Commission) due to vehicle sight distances and the narrowness of the structure. The target date for construction start is 2/9/2005 with a completion of 8/10/2005.

Thanks to our MTC volunteer and project manager Ed Taylor, P.E., for leading our efforts. Also, thanks to Ned Williams and the MTC E&C committee for helping with the process.

Significant progress also continues on repairing the trail from mile 0 to 9 in the aftermath of hurricane Ivan. Volunteer support has been tremendous. Volunteers have been working every weekend since the 9/17/04 event. All of the flood debris has been removed and the trails sub-base has been restored in all but six locations. Thanks to an Allegheny County Regional Asset District (ARAD) grant of $25,000, we were able to hire contractors (BKG) to fix three of the sites. We are in the process of requesting additional ARAD funds to fix a fourth site. A big thanks to the ARAD board for their support of this treasured Allegheny County asset.

Robinson Township Municipal Authority has tentatively agreed to fix the mile “0” area as part of a water line installation. (The flood probably saved them some excavation costs.) The remaining site is at mile 3.1 adjacent to Old Beaver Grade Road. The sub-base at this site had the most damage and the cost will be significant. We have applied for a DCNR grant to repair this site.

Allegheny County has donated 3,000 tons of milled asphalt for repairing the base. We are currently evaluating funding sources for purchasing the limestone surface material. Finally, we have requested help from Moon, Robinson, and Findlay Townships in placing this material. The Townships have been great partners and have helped previously when their respective road crews are not busy with road maintenance. So, pray for a mild winter. A big thanks to our Director of Development Dave Wright, P.E., who is heading the flood repair efforts.

Monetary support from individuals and organizations also has been a tremendous boost to the repair efforts. One-hundred seventeen individuals or organizations have contributed over $17,000. In addition on Friday, December 10, Ms. Betty Tata of the Laurel Foundation gave us some wonderful news: The Laurel Foundation Board has awarded the MTC $25,000 for trail repair. This donation was very timely and greatly appreciated. Thank you, Laurel Foundation! We are overwhelmed with everyone’s generosity and we vow to do everything possible to restore “your” beloved trail as soon as possible.

Have a mild winter. (Sorry skiers).

Dennis Pfeiffer

A Tale of Two Trails: Connecting them Will Mean the Best of Times

Many trail users know that the Montour Trail and the Panhandle Trail cross near McDonald. In fact, Montour Trail users pass over the Panhandle Trail as they cross the McDonald Viaduct. How many riders and walkers crossing the trestle have asked themselves, “How do I get from ‘way up here’ to ‘way down there’?” The answer is trail users currently have to leave either trail and ride on local roads to make the connection.

But steps are being taken to join the two trails. A connecting trail once used as a transfer track between the two railroads exists but is undeveloped. Construction of a sewer project nearby is one reason the connecting trail hasn’t been completed. The other cause for delay is the need to have a bridge over Robinson Run on the connecting trail. Fortunately, the foundation for such a bridge exists in the form of an abandoned 60-foot railroad span dating to the early 1900s. It’s a long leap, however, from a structure carrying railroad equipment 90 years ago and abandoned over 25 years ago to a safe, attractive bridge for bicycles and pedestrians in the 21st century.

The project to convert the bridge began over a year ago with study and discussion among the trail volunteer engineering and construction experts. Their decision that the project was viable was a beginning but wasn’t going anywhere unless a volunteer construction supervisor could be found to plan and oversee the project. The trail is fortunate to have among

Continued p 6
New Garage to Hold All Montour Equipment

With the face and first pre-fabricated rib-shaped panels of the maintenance garage already in place, volunteers from the Montour Trail Council threw a ground breaking celebration Friday, October 18, 2004, at the 28-mile marker of the 47.5-mile trail.

When completed, the centrally located, 40-by-74-foot, Quonset hut-style garage will house a grader, roller, tractors, trucks and mowers.

“We’ve gathered enough equipment over the years that we actually build our own trail now,” said Dennis Pfeiffer, president of the Montour Trail Council. And although a contractor poured the concrete pad at a cost of $21,000, volunteers are constructing the building rib by rib, tightening 8,500 bolts.

The Montour Trail Council dedicated the garage to Burgh’s Pizza and Wing Pub in Bridgeville in honor of the efforts of the three owners — Tom, Frank and Dan Daily — who have raised about $50,000 for the Montour Trail through a 10K race held annually since 2001.

Tom Daily was unable to be present at the celebration because he was on his way to Baltimore, where he was running in a marathon.

John Hooton of Peters Township often saw Daily running near his office in Bridgeville and made it his mission to acquaint him with the trail. Once Daily became familiar with the idea, he ran with it, literally, funding the four races with 47 corporate sponsors. Last year, more than 500 runners and walkers participated. The fifth annual race is scheduled for April 24.

In addition to the race, Burgh’s Pizza and Wings has collected $2,000 from customers who have donated to a “trail box” in the restaurant, Frank Daily said.

“Although we have been able to obtain grants for the trail, there are no grants available for the garage,” Pfeiffer said.

Frank Ludwin of Cecil Township, a MTC volunteer, operates a backhoe in front of the yet-to-be-finished garage near Hendersonville October 18, 2004. Insert: Frank and Dan Daily present MTC president Dennis Pfeiffer with this year’s Burgh’s Run proceeds.

Barbara S. Miller

Editor’s Note: Much of this article and the photo originally appeared in the Observer-Reporter. Reprinted with permission.

IKEA Tree Sale a Strange Success Thanks to Volunteer Effort

This was a very strange year for the tree sale. IKEA cut back the number of trees ordered for the sale, but this year’s tree sale income was over $100 more than last year at $1,524.45.

I believe that because IKEA’s sign mentioned flood restoration of the trail supporters responded with cash for us by buying the cut and wrap.

Congratulations for another great effort by all of you. Many of you worked in bad weather. Our friend David Dyler ended up with a pocket full of water on Thursday night that fell from the roof of the shelter without warning.

Putting on an event like this is like building a building. Unlike a building built with bricks this event is built with the efforts people. Every person who contributed to this event made the event a success by adding his or her strength and energy to it. As a building couldn’t stand without bricks, we couldn’t survive without the support of our volunteers. As a coordinator for this event I am extremely proud of the effort of all of you.

This year was special to me because I got to spend a lot of quality time with many friends including my cousin Charlie Forquer. Thanks to both the volunteers and all those who bought their trees at IKEA.

Jess Forquer
Peters/Library Our Largest Effort in 2004

The largest single project tackled by volunteers in 2004 was the construction of 1.4 miles of new trail in Peters Township, from the Arrowhead Trail at Library Junction behind the horse farm eastward to the Allegheny/Washington County line, a project known as Phase 11.

Beginning in March, thirty volunteer workers cleared the right of way of trees, vegetation and stumps with chain saws and brush cutters and cleared truckloads of man-made debris. Included in the cleanup were dozens of discarded concrete slabs, many weighing over one ton, and a large assortment of metal detritus from the railroad and past littering that totaled nearly 6,000 pounds.

Next was building a construction access through the property of Betlers Construction capable of supporting triaxle dump trucks weighing over 30 tons across the headwaters of Piney Fork Creek onto the right of way. During this whole project, Al Betler, Jr., has been an extraordinary trail neighbor, not only by allowing us temporary use of his land for access, but for donating materials for the access bridge and spending hours of his time to help out with his own equipment. Thanks, Al!

This section is a challenge in terms of drainage control and fixing past water damage. Due to these conditions, there was considerable work needed to control the extensive erosion and damaged culverts. Also, many hundreds of feet of newly installed under drains, storm water piping, inlets and culverts necessitated excavation and installation with heavy equipment. Maintaining a haul road for the delivery of over 10,000 cubic yards of fill material (to bring the trail elevation behind the horse farm close to what it was when the railroad was still operating) and installing a recycled asphalt paving sub-base kept the MTC’s small stable of construction equipment busy. Volunteers operated dump trucks, front-end loaders, backhoes, the MTC grader and roller, and a Frank Ludwin-designed spreader box, making up a large portion of the volunteer hours expended.

So far, over 1,700 volunteer hours have been expended on this project. The approximately $28,000 of value that these volunteer hours represent a large portion of the local match we need for the $70,000 DCNR grant being used to fund this construction. Volunteers who have donated at least ten hours of their time to Phase 11 so far are: Bill Capp, Andy Glade, Hoyt Hall, Mark Imgrund, John Kozak, Frank Ludwin, Jim Robbins, Terry Tischler, and Dave Wright. Special mention should be made of four of these individuals who have each donated over 200 hours of their time to this project alone: Bill Capp, Mark Imgrund, John Kozak, and Frank Ludwin, with Bill leading the way at 420 hours in 2004.

Numerous contributions were made by other individuals, municipalities, and companies, including the donation of pavement millings from Bethel Park and fill material delivery, leveling, and compacting by Beech Construction.

Mark Imgrund

Two Trails, cont. from p. 4

its volunteers the perfect man for the job. Jack Peth is a retired construction planner, and has been involved with the Montour Trail since its inception in the late 1980s. Jack is also experienced in trail construction, having been construction supervisor for the Quicksilver Bridge project in 2000. When Jack agreed to take on this new project, things began to roll.

Work began in early April on the bridge that is located near Noblestown Road about one-half mile west of the McDonald Viaduct. Brush and trees had to be cleared from the area, the original ties had to be removed from the bridge deck, and work surfaces on the bridge deck and scaffolds underneath had to be designed and constructed. All this was necessary to prepare for the major activity of pouring concrete blocks at both ends of the bridge to securely encase the steel bridge beams. Each box is about thirteen feet wide, two feet thick, and four feet high and contains nearly four cubic yards of concrete. The forms to hold the concrete had to be painstakingly built around and between the steel bridge beams. Corrosion control was a big part of this year’s effort and we plan to give all the steelwork a fresh coat of paint, the first in about 25 to 30 years, in the 2005 construction season.

The work was challenging, difficult and often dirty but undertaken with enthusiasm by the typical group of committed Trail volunteers. Thirty different people, with Peth leading the way, put in nearly 700 hours on the project. Nearby residents Roger McElhaney, Stan Sattinger and John Wasco were on hand most weekends for the work. Also working most weekends were Charlie Beaumariage, Dave Blistan and Dave Oyler. Pete Merther was always available with the trail tractor when he was needed. Jack Swisher helped on several occasions with the acetylene torch. Also contributing significant time to the project were Charlie Cook, John Hooten, Mark Imgrund, Gil McGurl, Rich Power, Ned Williams, and Dave Wright.

The project was closed down for the year after the flood damage to other parts of the trail. Volunteers were sorely needed elsewhere.

We’ll take up where we left off in the spring, and with good luck and lots of volunteer help, by next fall you’ll be able to get from “way up here” to “way down there” without jumping.

John Wasco
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

Marcia Agnelly    Roberta Meixell
Thomas Alloway, Jr.    Grace Merlin
Richard & Ann Arena    Linda R. Mesko
Rev. John Ayoob    Beeje Moohead
Martha Bagdes    John & Kimberly Morley
Norman L. Beesley    Dolores Nemec
Robert Bowman        Edmund Nusser
Ralph Braden    James & Jessica Ohr
Jeffrey S. Burkett    Barbara A. Peer
Mary Ann Cercone    Debbie Pepe
Robert Cheswick    Earl Peterson
Linda Cordle    Barbara Petrone
Hanley B. Cox    Phillip & Linda Pfeiffer
Donald O. Dumrauf    Edward Ritter
Janet Eisenbach    Deborah L. Rudar
Karen & Gerard Eonta    Richard M. Rudowski
Clarence & Sandra Finley    Robert Schaub
Jacqueline Fisher    John Schwartz
Don Flockerzi    Pat Seibel
Rachel & Paul Freund    Aruna & Mahendra Shah
Marvin & Nancy Fry    Joanne W. Spero
Alber & Louise Garcia    Cynthia & Keith Stewart
Kevin Geiselman    Tatiana Svirid
Dean Goodbread    Dan Tarr
Clara Hanny    Arthur D. Tracy
James D. Harkins    John & Katie Uzzo
John & Sandra Harvey    Denise & Victor Verzi
Hiles family    James & Marianne Williamson
William L. Hoch    Rosemarie Wooten
Ivan Hofmann    Katherine Zorn
William H. Holt
Father Rich Jones
Diane Jurasko
Don & Sabine Kane
Paul Klein
William Labrum
Anthony Lalli
James & Barbara Lantzy
Janet Larson
Mary Ann Lawry
Debra L. Madonna
Michael Marshall
Charles Martin
Larry McGrail
Marianne & Bill McIntyre
Doug Meiser

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
- BENEFACTOR $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 tollfree, within Pennsylvania, 1-800-732-9999. 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, or Combined Federal Campaign Contributor Choice option #9308, where you work.
Volunteers Needed

Volunteers are needed for a trail cleanups on the Clairton to Large trail segment on January 8 and 15, weather pending.

The winter cleanup will enable trash to be removed that is obscured by foliage in other seasons, in addition to removing flood debris. The work party will meet near the Large Park and Ride lot off of Route 51 at 9 a.m. Those attending should wear work gloves, sturdy shoes, and clothes appropriate for the weather. For information or directions, contact Paul McKeown at 412-835-6692 or e-mail mckeownp@adelphia.net.

Those who RSVP with Paul will be notified of a bad weather work party cancellation.