



## The Gap Gets Closer to Being Closed

### For Your Consideration

Summer afternoon - Summer afternoon... the two most beautiful words in the English language.

Henry James



Another benchmark was met for the construction project to close the gap between Cecil and Peters Townships on April 10 with the deck pour on the bridge that crosses over the Pittsburgh and Ohio Central Railroad (the former Washington Secondary of the Pennsylvania Railroad). The contractor for the Trail Council, Mingo Creek Construction, took about 4.5 hours to complete the pour for the 144 foot through truss span. The concrete was dyed rust-red to mask the rust that will eventually appear on the deck from the overhead steel truss. To see this in color, please see the electronic version on the Montour Trail Website.

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While they wait for the concrete to cure, they have begun to place the deck on the bridge over Valleybrook Road and Brush Run (see page 7). Once the concrete is cured, they will clear the muck and improve the drainage in Greers Tunnel, and then begin work on the deck of the high bridge that crosses Chartiers Creek. The Trail hopes to have the grand-opening of this section this fall. Thanks to Bryan Seip for the photography and contributing to this story.

## We Do Gabions! by Gil McGurl

On May 5 and 6, erstwhile Montour Trail volunteers installed a 27 foot long gabion wall on the West Peters section of the Trail between Valleybrook and Linwood Road. The wall replaced a partially collapsed railroad tie wall along the trail. For those of you who are unfamiliar with gabions, they are wire baskets that can be filled with rocks and wired together to create retaining walls. Frank Ludwin's artful backhoe work created the level excavation on the side of the trail by a very steep hillside. The volunteers placed three gabions (3' by 3' by 9') in the excavation and topped them with four half height gabions. Gabions must be filled by hand with rock to avoid damaging the wire. During the process the volunteers placed over 20 tons of rock in the wall. We suspect that there were many sore backs after the project. Completion of this wall was needed so that placement of trail sub base can begin in early June after the contractor completes work on the bridge over Valleybrook Road. Volunteers constructing the gabion wall are from left to right: Bryan Seip, Rich Blasciewicz, Stan Sattinger and Bill Luxner.



MTC Web Addresses  
Visit the Montour Trail web-site at:  
[www.montourtrail.org](http://www.montourtrail.org)  
to converse  
<http://groups.yahoo.com/group/Montour-Trail/>



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#### THE MONTOUR TRAIL-LETTER

is published bi-monthly January through December. All correspondence should be addressed to:

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## The Prez Sez

I am using my "pulpit" this issue to spread the word about a new initiative that combines two important ingredients of trail building – volunteers and funding. This new program celebrates the volunteerism of trail enthusiasts in our region by nurturing and supporting their trail-building and maintenance efforts. These efforts have been, and continue to be, one of the most important ingredients in the success of trail organizations like ours. Authors and outdoor enthusiasts Mary Shaw and Roy Weil, whose trail advocacy and support are very familiar to those in the recreational trail world, have recently established the "They Working" Trail Volunteer Fund (TVF) under the umbrella of The Pittsburgh Foundation.

The TVF's motto is



"No worthy project with willing volunteers should founder for lack of tools or materials."

The purpose of the TVF is to provide grants to purchase tools, materials, and supplies to be used by volunteer trail projects that create, maintain, or enhance the network of trails suitable for multi-day bicycle touring trails in western Pennsylvania and surrounding areas.

The Fund is designed for projects of a few hundred to perhaps a few thousand dollars, which complements major grant sources available elsewhere. In general, award decisions are made in December, March, June, and September on proposals received by the first day of those months. Grants can only be made to 501(c)(3) and other tax exempt charitable entities in western Pennsylvania and nearby areas, and not surprisingly, the appropriate trail organization must be aware of and support any proposed project.

From the TVF's website, some examples of projects that would be eligible include:

- Construction materials to be placed by volunteers.
- Tools to be used in a major trail project effort staffed principally by volunteers.
- Rental of major equipment such as spreaders or wood chippers when that yields high leverage for volunteer effort.
- Supplies and materials such as paint, brushes, and lumber for volunteer construction or maintenance of trail structures and signs, when the volunteer effort is substantial compared to the cost of materials.
- Mowing machines and maintenance for long trails that are mowed by volunteers.
- Equipment kits such as first aid kits and repair tools for trail patrols.
- Materials for student or youth volunteer projects such as Scout, service, or church projects. *(continues on page 4)*

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 55 mile recreational trail for non-motorized activity regardless of physical ability or financial wherewithal.

## 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 Mark at 724-941-6351 for more information or to get on the agenda.

### **Cecil Friends:**

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. Work and cleanup parties are scheduled as needed. Call 412-496-4308 for more information, or email densimwx@comcast.net

### **Airport Area Friends**

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, Robinson, North Fayette, and Findlay is encouraged to attend. Call 412-859-3020 for more information.

Work and cleanup party, every second Saturday of the month - 9:00 a.m. Call 412-262-3748 for more information and location.

### **Bethel Park Friends:**

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 and cleanup party, every second and fourth Saturday of the month - 8:30 a.m. Call Bob O'Connell at 412-833-6259 for location and information.

### **South Hills Friends**

Meeting second Wednesday of the month at 6:30 p.m. at the Jefferson Hills Borough Building. Work and cleanup parties scheduled and advertised as needed. For more information, contact David Oyler at 412-831-9288, davidoyler@verizon.net, or Paul McKeown at 412-835-6692, mckeownp@comcast.net

### **Fort Cherry Friends:**

Friends of the Trail Meeting, second Wednesday of the month at McDonald Borough Bldg., Council chambers at 7:00 p.m. Work and cleanup parties, scheduled as needed. For more information, contact Ray Johnston at 724-356-2621.

### **Peters Township Friends:**

Friends of the Trail Meeting, first non-holiday Monday of the month at Peters Township Parks and Recreation Center at 7:00 p.m. For more information on work and cleanup parties, please contact Jim Robbins at 724-941-6132, or for monthly meetings, Mark Imgrund at 724-941-6351 or by e-mail at markimgrund@comcast.net.

## *Trail Dust from the Editor's Desktop*

Spring is blooming on the Montour Trail and the increased hours in sunshine and temperatures associated with spring also brings more users to the Trail. It also brings out more ATV operators who find the trail a convenient way to get back in forth from their haunts, and in some cases, from their homes to their haunts. These ATV operators in many instances are violating the law by not having their vehicles registered with DCNR, besides trespassing on the Trail.

Recently, there have been reports of trail users encountering ATV's on the Trail, especially in Washington County. Some of these ATV operators have made threatening actions to Trail users and these threatening actions have been so strong that some users will not return.

What to do? Besides editing this newsletter, I also participate in the Montour Trail Patrol, which was described in a recent Trail-letter (November-December 2007). When encountering ATV's, we try to identify the actor and the equipment (a photograph, if possible) and then notify local law enforcement without antagonizing the operator. We realize the chance of apprehension at that given moment is very low, but if we continue to make reports and build evidence, we hope the police will then be able to take applicable action. There will be a meeting soon with the local police departments representing the jurisdictions that the Trail passes through to discuss what actions can be taken.

So when you see an ATV or dirt bike on the Trail, do not hesitate call the local authorities using 911. While on the Trail make note of the mileposts and landmarks as you pass by, and, if you need to call 911, whether it be for illegal motorized vehicles or a medical emergency, you can tell the dispatcher where you are. This will expedite the arrival of assistance.

Soon, Washington County will have one of the most advanced GIS-aided dispatch systems in the country. They will be able to display the location of a cell phone caller on a map to within 50 feet of the actual location at the dispatcher's station. The Montour Trail will be on this system. Until then, if you need to call for assistance, please be sure to describe your location thoroughly, whether you are in Allegheny or Washington County.

Happy Cycling

*Dennis*

Tim Killmeyer came across some old magazines containing some nifty little poems that talk about cycling at the turn of the century. He will be sharing these as space permits.



## Donation of Thirty Concrete Curb Stops by Dennis Pfeiffer

On Friday, February 8, the Airport Friends of the Montour Trail gladly accepted 30 concrete curb stops from the 336<sup>th</sup> Engineer Company of Weirton, West Virginia. The 336<sup>th</sup> received new plastic curb stops so the concrete ones became available. Captain Mark Smith of Robinson Township, the Commander of the 336<sup>th</sup>, made the arrangements for the donation. We thanked Captain Smith and his troops and asked him to tell us about the 336<sup>th</sup>.

“The 336<sup>th</sup> Engineer Company is located in Weirton, West Virginia, and has a history of assisting both in the community and overseas. The unit has participated in construction efforts in 5 countries, conducted local flood control operations and has undertaken numerous community based improvement projects. The 336<sup>th</sup>, (formally Bravo Company, 463<sup>rd</sup>) mobilized for combat construction operations in Iraq in October of 2004 and served in country for 12 months. Many of the unit members served individually on subsequent operations with other units in Iraq and Afghanistan. The unit hopes to continue building community relationships and train for future deployments through assisting volunteer based organizations like the Montour Trail Council.”

*Note: In early May, the unit departed for a month of training in California and will return in mid-June.*

## The Prez Sez Continues

Some of our Montour Trail volunteers are personally familiar with this new fund, since one of our current projects is the beneficiary of the TVF’s first grant, made to the MTC for safety improvements at the intersection of Routes 50 and 980 near Venice, PA. The Fund supported the purchase of materials that volunteers are using this year to create a crosswalk and a stairway/ramp to eliminate the stretch of bicycling on busy Route 50 currently need to bypass the missing bridge. Two other early grants have benefited projects related to the Butler-Freeport Trail.

We applaud this new initiative, and expect that it will provide on-going support and encouragement to volunteerism for our trails. Please visit the TVF website at <http://they-working.org/> to learn more about it or to find out how you can contribute monetarily to the fund. Also, if you happen to encounter a couple riding a tandem on the local trails with a small “Green Giant Sprout” figurine on the handlebars, be sure to say “hello and thank you” to Mary and Roy.

Passing on your left,

Mark

Looking for a gift for a friend or a loved one? Then visit the Montour Trail Store at <http://www.montourtrail.org/store/store.html> or while you are out visiting your favorite stores, stop by Imagine Threads at 501 Valleybrook Rd. Ste 104 in McMurray to see the Montour Trail items in person.



*From left to right: SPC Harry Bennett, SGT William Shreve, SGT William Conner, and SGT John Scheetz from the 336th Engineer Company, Weirton, WV.*



*SGT William Shreve and SGT John Scheetz prepare to unload the concrete curbs near the Enlow Ball Field in Imperial.*

## Clairton Trailhead Gets a Bulletin Board by Dave Oyler and Mike Huhn

Thanks to the Boy Scouts of Troop 228, Bethel Park and Eagle Scout Candidate Mike Huhn, the Clairton Trailhead (Milepost 46.2) now has a bulletin board. The Eagle Scout Project was arranged by South Hills Friends of the Montour Trail President Paul McKeown. Mike directed the efforts of 28 scouts and adults to perform the impressive feat of installing the board in a single day on April 26. In addition, the scouts also repainted three picnic benches and weeded the garden at the Clairton Trailhead. An important part of any Eagle Scout project is obtaining the resources to conduct the project and Mike arranged for donations of money and materials from US Steel Corp., Miller Ace Hardware of Mt. Oliver, Evey True Value Hardware of Bethel Park, Lowe's of Robinson Township and Brookside Lumber of Bethel Park.



Shown in the photo are (1<sup>st</sup> row, left to right): Seth Riggle, Scott Mulvihill, Sammy Furlong, Jake Miller, Will Ashton, and Bev Huhn. In the 2<sup>nd</sup> row (L to R) are: Walt Kerin, Sam Weinblum, J.T. Herwald, Tanner Morehead, Alex Kiselica, Chris Huhn, and Steve Miller. Standing (L to R) are: Eagle Scout Candidate Mike Huhn, Don Barrette, and Bob Manfredo. Not shown in the photo is photographer and Scoutmaster, Carl Huhn.

Other volunteers who helped on the project, but not shown in the photo were (in alphabetical order): Chase Campbell, Dan and Geff Cozma, Bill and Ian Fleming, Dylan McKenna, Dennis and Tony Oates, Paul VanRyzin, and Daniel Worth.

The Scouts and the South Hills Friends would like to give special thanks to Mr. Don Barrette, Mr. Steve Miller, Mr. Bob Manfredo and Scoutmaster Carl Huhn for the help and guidance they provided the scouts in completing this project.

## The 8<sup>th</sup> Running of Burgh's Pizza & Wing 10K Run & 2 Mile Walk by John Hooton



*photo courtesy of John Hooton*

*The men's winner Justin Simpson crossing the line.*

Sunday, April 20, 2008, turned out to be a fine race day in Cecil Park, and some of our friends and out-of-state visitors took full advantage of our great weather and the almost level course to grab the prize money! We sponsors and race organizers say, "Hurray" for them, Let's give the men their due- they already have the money:

	<u>Age</u>	<u>Residence</u>	<u>Time</u>
Justin Simpson	24	Morgantown, W. Va.	32:07
Nick Kruse	24	Youngstown, Ohio	32:79
Travis Simpson	27	Weirton, W. Va.	33:14

And for the women:

Mindy Sawtelle	35	Indiana, Pa.	39:09
Pam Wolstencroft	38	Moon Twp, Pa.	43:14
Valerie Nagel	36	Pittsburgh, Pa.	43:47

As Burgh's has done for us every year, they served their post race hoagies, pasta, wings, salad and on and on with a choice of beverages and the DJ's background music, it all makes for a real party atmosphere.

The format of the race changed a bit this year-for safety's sake- instead of the finishers' final kicks being on the ramp going down to Cecil Park, the course was extended a bit further east so the finish line could take place on the Trail. It continues to be our Trail's premier fundraising event, and we are most appreciative of the Daily brothers' efforts on our behalf. To date, the seven previous races have brought in over \$126,000. It is a bit early to tell, but we are hopeful this year's proceeds will be at or over \$20,000 this year.

## MONTOUR RAILROAD HISTORY BY BOB CIMINEL

## The Engines That Moved the Trains

When the Imperial Coal Company built the Montour Railroad in 1878, its first locomotives were named after the two major coal mines along the route. The Montour's first locomotive, Number 2, was named "Cliff Mine." Engine number 3 was named "Partridge Mine." (Before the completions of the Mifflin Extension in 1914, the Partridge mine at North Star was one of the biggest coal producers on the Montour.) The "Cliff Mine" and "Partridge Mine" were relatively small locomotives, but were quite suitable for taking approximately 10 empty coal cars up the grade to Imperial from Montour Junction. However, as the demand for coal and the number of passengers grew at the turn-of-the-century, the Montour found itself in need of more powerful locomotives. These came in the form of used locomotives purchased from the Pittsburgh & Lake Erie Railway and the Bessemer & Lake Erie Railroad.

Beginning with locomotive number 6, the Montour began using steam engines with the 2-8-0 wheel arrangement, meaning two small wheels in the front, eight driving wheels beneath the boiler, and no wheels beneath the firebox. This type of locomotive was called a "Consolidation" and was one of the first standard locomotives adopted by railroads across the country. (Each new type of steam locomotive was usually given a nickname, typically related to the railroad that purchased the first one. For example, the 4-8-4 wheel arrangement was called a "Northern" because the Northern Pacific Railroad bought the first locomotive of that classification.)

As the nation geared up for World War I, and the Pittsburgh Coal Company opened a plethora of new mines along the Mifflin Extension, the 2-8-0 Consolidations no longer had the power to move the railroad's longer and heavier coal trains. A new locomotive was needed. The Montour selected the 2-8-2 "Mikado" type, originally built for the Japanese national railways. The two extra wheels beneath the locomotive cab improved the engine's stability when running in reverse, which occurred frequently on the single-tracked Montour.

Beginning in 1915, the Montour purchased 16 "Mikado" locomotives from the American Locomotive Company. Bearing numbers 20 thru 35, these engines became the backbone of the Montour Railroad during the First and Second World Wars. Their reliability is attested to by the fact that the Montour's "Mikes" operated for almost 40 years before being replaced by diesels. Aerial photographs of southwestern Pennsylvania taken in 1939 frequently show Montour coal trains with a "Mikado" on the front and rear.

When the demands for coal during WWII stretched the Montour to the breaking point, the railroad purchased nine second-hand "Mikes" from the New York Central, Virginian, and Delaware, Lackawanna & Western. Numbered 40 – 45 and 50- 52, these work horses pulled the railroad through its peak years.

The end of steam locomotive operation on the Montour Railroad came in the early Fifties when the railroad began ordering diesel switchers from General Motors' Electromotive Division. Designated SW7 or SW9 (the differences between these two locomotives are almost indistinguishable); these 1,200 horsepower engines were ordered in groups of four. (The first set of three locomotives consisted of two SW7 and one SW9, which were initially delivered to Montour subsidiary, Youngstown & Southern.) Engines 73 – 76 were built in May of 1952, followed by 77 – 80 in December 1952, 81 – 84 in January 1953, and the last engine, number 85, was built in September 1952. From 1953 until the SW's were sold in 1981 and replaced with P&LE SW1500, every Montour coal train had three or four SW switchers on the front end, usually pulling for all they were worth.

Montour SW9 number 76 was probably the most recognized locomotive on the railroad's engine roster. After being involved in a wreck in 1974, the locomotive was rebuilt by the P&LE and painted red, white, and blue in celebration of the 1976 Sesquicentennial celebration. Number 76 remained in its patriotic livery until it was sold in 1981 and became Inland Steel No. 134.

For you more mature (older) trail users, as you walk, jog, or pedal up the many grades on the Montour Trail, try to imagine what it was like when a 148 ton steam locomotive struggled up that same grade pulling 40 or 50 hopper cars full of coal, with smoke and steam shooting out the stack 50 feet into the air, and hot cinders falling like rain along the right-of-way.

Some younger trail users may have actually witnessed trains with four 1,200-HP diesels, their throttles in the eighth notch for maximum power, their eight traction motors whining as they devour 600 volts and 400 amps of power while their cooling fans blow clouds of dust from beneath the locomotive frames as they scratch and claw their way to the top of the grade; and after the train passes, nothing but silence. But what a show it was!



*Bob Ciminel is the founder of the Montour Railroad Yahoo group [http://finance.groups.yahoo.com/group/montour\\_rr/](http://finance.groups.yahoo.com/group/montour_rr/) There are currently 215 members from across the country. You are encouraged to join. There is a wealth of information about the Montour Railroad at this location and you can pose questions of its membership, from whom you are sure to get an answer.*

## Welcome New Members

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

### New Members

Christopher W. Aiken  
 Nancy Brown & Michael Wright  
 Janet Debski  
 Cynthia Fink  
 Bernard Halpin  
 Bill Martin  
 Justin Rees  
 David Sartori  
 Ronald Territ  
 Shawnda Whittenberger

### Benefactors

Pete Grondziowski  
 Daniel J. Hirsh  
 Kurt J. Lesker Co.  
 Stanley D. Solak

## Valleybrook Bridge Number 3 Construction Continues



photo courtesy of Bryan Seip

The previous issue of the Newsletter showed the steel being erected for this bridge. Now, the installation of the bridge deck on Valleybrook Bridge Number 3 is underway. For the Montour Railroad buffs this bridge was known as West End #4. The #4 noting the Montour #4 Mine, which by the way, was the next to last mine to be served by the Montour Railroad. This is the bridge nearest to Chartiers Creek and the "purple bridge" that takes Valleybrook Road over the creek from Peters to Cecil Township.

## I want to help complete the Montour Trail!

### I want to join the Montour Trail Council at this level:

- Student/Senior** \$15
- Individual** \$25
- Family** \$35
- Supporting** \$50
- Sustaining** \$100
- Benefactor** \$250
- Leader's Circle** \$500+

Make checks payable to the "Montour Trail Council"

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*The Montour Trail Council is a 501(c)(3) non-profit corporation. All donations are tax-deductible. You may also be eligible for matching funds from your employer. A copy of the Montour Trail Council's official registration and financial information may be obtained from the Pennsylvania Department of State by calling (toll-free within Pennsylvania) 800-732-0999. Registration does not imply endorsement.*

#### Don't Forget

The Montour Trail Council may be designated as your United Way Contributor Choice as option #3308, or Combined Federal Campaign Contributor Choice option #9308 where you work.



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As a reminder, Saturday, June 7, 2008 is National Trails Day, a day set aside by the American Hiking Society to recognize the many types of trails (hiking, water, rails-to-trails, etc.) we are fortunate to have in this nation. Several of the Friends Groups will be marking this event with their own festivities. Please support your nearest event.

**The Airport Friends** will have information stands along the trail between mileposts 0 and 11.

**The Bethel Park Friends** will have its annual Party on the Trail and JR Taylor Memorial 5K. The race begins by Clifton Road with a turnaround on the Peters Township side of the trail near Brush Run Road. Registration begins at 7:30 a.m. at the Washington School Parking Lot. The Race will begin at 8:30 a.m. Contact Phil Ehrman, Race Director,

at [pehrman@corporateairllc.com](mailto:pehrman@corporateairllc.com) for more information.

The Party on the Trail is an event designed to encourage residents and friends to come out and use the trail. Participants will receive lunch and have an opportunity to win prizes donated by local businesses and individuals. A balloon artist will be available from 11 a.m. to 1 p.m. and other activities are planned. Registration will begin at 9:30 a.m. in the Washington School parking lot. Contact Leigh Ann Sobzack, the 2008 Party Planner, [glenn-leigh@worldnet.att.net](mailto:glenn-leigh@worldnet.att.net) for additional information.

**The Cecil Friends** are hosting their 4th annual Tails for the Montour Trail 5K Fun Walk between 9:00 a.m. and Noon with the barking off at 9:30 a.m. The Walk begins at the Kurnick (National) Access area along Cecil Henderson Road in Cecil Township and will take place between Kurnicks and the Muse-Bishop Bridge. Registration will open at 9:00 a.m. All dogs receive a neckerchief and a bag full of goodies from local canine businesses. There will be a 50-50 raffle and great door prizes. Walk-ups are welcome. The entry fee is \$12 per dog. Proceeds will support the restoration of the National Tunnel.