LETTER FROM THE PREZ

It's Unanimous!

MILE 0 IS AT CUMBERLAND

Big News! We may not have a name for our trail system yet, but we have agreed on how we will number the miles.

As trail has been built, every trail organization marked the miles with their own unique system.

As Maryland’s funding began to materialize and trail construction was finally on the horizon, they asked whether they were at the beginning or the end of the system.

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Feds Grant $50K to Promote Trail

A $50,000 grant to the ATA to develop and begin to implement a marketing plan for the entire trail system has been approved by the U.S. Forest Service. The grant was announced by U.S. Rep. John Murtha.

"This trail is already having substantial economic impact," Murtha said, "but we'll need a marketing plan that enables people to easily get information and plan trail-oriented vacations."

A marketing firm will be hired to plan and begin to promote the opening of the 100-mile continuous section, anticipated in October.

Some of the funds will be used to support the development of an "inn-to-inn" package that will enable people to make reservations for a multi-day trip at several bed-and-breakfast establishments through one internet transaction or one toll-free call.

(Continued on Page 4)
Construction 2000
FIRST 100 MILES TO BE FINISHED BY FALL

The BIG NEWS FOR 2000 is the fall completion of 100 continuous miles between McKeepseart and Meyersdale. Engineering is proceeding nicely and construction will begin on the three remaining segments. But there's plenty of other construction going on all the way from Pittsburgh to Cumberland.

The Montour Trail has two segments under construction this year: Boggs to Quicksilver and Large to Clairton. The big challenge on the Boggs - Quicksilver section is the new bridge over Route 980, but the ever-resourceful Dave Wright procured a never used, three-year-old pedestrian bridge for the site.

Robinson Township of Washington County is doing the trail surfacing with the Montour volunteers doing the rest of the work. Opening this section will give happy Montour Trail users a continuous ride of more than 17 miles from Groveton to McDonald.

The Montour's two-mile Large to Clairton section will be under construction most of the summer. Three small bridges need to be replaced due to last year's flood damage and the trail is needed for a service road for rebuilding the Ravensburg Bridge, but it will be ready for final trail surface and opening in Spring 2001.

The Friends of the Riverfront won't be idle on the Three Rivers Heritage Trail, either. A temporary trail is being built from the current east end of the 18th Street segment up to the J&L Hot Metal Bridge and permanent trail from there to the east end of the LTV property. There is some hope that construction may even get to Beck's Run this year.

Steel Valley Trail is building a 1-mile section in conjunction with The Waterfront development in Homestead and another 1-mile section in Clairton. Both are slated to be finished early this summer.

Yough River North is finishing the "Dura-Bond Bypass" this summer from the 15th Street Bridge to Dead Man's Hollow. This section departs from the old railroad grade and forges a new trail along the hillside.

Pennsylvania's Allegheny Highlands Trail has two vital segments being completed this summer: Confluence to Ft. Hill and Salisbury Viaduct to Meyersdale. Construction will take place on both segments through the summer and includes a new highway overpass in Meyersdale.

The other big Allegheny Highlands project - Big Savage Tunnel - is being engineered this summer. Design work should be finished in time for construction to begin in Spring 2001.

Allegheny Highlands of Maryland has engineering completed on their first section of trail and construction will begin in October of this year. The work will involve moving the tracks of the Western Maryland Scenic Railway and will begin when the railroad's tourist season is over. Five and a half miles should be open by Spring 2001.

NEW! TRAIL MAP and GUIDE

The NEW Allegheny Trail Alliance Map and Guide is finished, just in time for the summer biking and hiking season. New features of the four-color map include a table of services and a mileage chart.

20,000 copies have been printed and will be distributed through the region.

"With all the information we're giving you from this map, the Linking Up Guidebook and our website, you have no excuse not to ride our trail," says Linda McKenna Boxx, president of the ATA.

You can order a copy by writing to Allegheny Trail Alliance 419 College Ave., Greensburg, PA 15601 or dropping us an email at: atamail@atatrail.org.

If you send us a $10.00 donation (see the coupon on Page 4), we'll send you a map along with Linking Up.
The Johnsons of Whitsett
A FAMILY OF TRAIL VOLUNTEERS

There's a section of the Youghiogheny River Trail around Whitsett, PA that trail manager Bob McKinley never has to worry about. There's a problem? Call the Johnsons. Problem solved. That's the way it is in Whitsett. The Johnsons live there and they help out on the trail.

The Johnsons are brothers Clarence (Clu), 55, Ernie, 51, Jimmie, 48, nephew Leon, 46, nephew Chris, 15, and any other nephews, cousins and grandkids who might be pressed into service.

Together, they've cleaned up the right of way prior to construction, decked 5 bridges ("we had tons of kids there") and have performed all sorts of maintenance on the trail, including regularly cutting the grass on the 10 miles between Whitsett and Dawson. (Cutting both sides makes it 20 miles.)

Of the 14 sons and daughters of Clarence and Viola Johnson, seven still live in the town where they grew up. Altogether, ten households in town belong to direct relatives. "Ours was one of three families in town that had 14 kids. We had a lot of playmates," laughed Ernie.

Whitsett was a railroad junction and coal mining town that became just another forgotten western Pennsylvania patch when the mines played out. Unless you lived there or fished in the river, there was absolutely no reason to go there.

Then the trail came through in 1998. "We found out about it at a meeting that Larry Ridenour held at the church," related Clarence, "Ernie and I have been bicycling for about 25 years, so we welcomed it."

The rest of the community's reaction to the trail was "mixed" at first, but now, continued Clarence, "everybody just loves it. It sure put us on the map."

"The town is cleaner now," Ernie said, "the railroad had become a dumping ground."

Passing trail users are grateful for the year-round portable toilet at the town park - the only one for miles. Its $62.50 monthly cost is shared jointly by the community and the trail group.

The big annual fundraising activity for the group is parking cars at Westmoreland County's Twin Lakes Park on the 4th of July. "The Johnsons show up with the best behaved bunch of teenagers I've ever seen, and I know about teenagers. I raised several myself," says McKinley.

And it's those teenagers who are the hope of the trail. Fifteen-year-old Chris, a sophomore at Frazier High School, said with pride that he rides his bike on the trail "constantly." Then he smiled and said, "I'll be in charge of the trail in the future."

Of course he will. He's from Whitsett. His last name is Johnson.
Be a "They"

Who are "They"?

"They" are the volunteers - people like you who give their time to do the dozens of jobs seen and unseen that make our trail possible.

"They" are also the people who join our trail groups and make a financial contribution. Bottom line: no "theyes," no trail. We need you to be a "they."

Just check the appropriate boxes and we'll send you all the information you need to join.

☐ Friends of the Riverfront (Three Rivers Heritage Trail)
☐ Montour Trail Council (Montour Trail)
☐ Steel Valley Trail Council (Steel Valley Trail)
☐ Regional Trail Corporation (Youghiogheny River Trail)
☐ Somerset Rails to Trails (Allegheny Highlands Trail in PA)
☐ Allegheny Highlands Trail of MD

AND/OR

☐ I want to help build the build the Pittsburgh to Cumberland Trail. My tax-deductible donation of $ is enclosed. (Please make checks payable to RTC/ATA). We'll send a copy of Linking Up guidebook to anyone donating $10 or more.

Name

Address

Clip and send to:

Allegheny Trail Alliance
419 College Ave.
Greensburg, PA 15601

HELP LAUNCH THE Y2K TREK!

Group Ride and Lunch
Saturday, June 17, 9:30 am
McKees Point Park
to
Cedar Creek or Connellsville
Self Shuttle

$5.00 per person, includes lunch
For information:
724-853-2453 or atamail@atatrail.org

TWO BRIDGES

(Continued from Page 1)

The old Western Maryland Railway bridge over the Casselman River at Confluence presented a different set of problems. It's a typical railroad deck girder bridge that retained its original ties. It's one of eight just like it on the Allegheny Highlands and Youghiogheny River North Trails.

This typical bridge has a very atypical deck - a deck that only took six weeks to install due to its innovative modular design. The deck is a series of 10' by 10' modules that were prefabricated at a blacksmith shop in Somerset and bolted in place on the site. Because of the modules, the job only took 6 weeks.

Funding for the $170,000 project came from the U.S. Forest Service Timber Bridge Initiative, the Pennsylvania Department of Conservation and Natural Resources, the ATA and the National Park Service Challenge Cost Share Program.

Other construction news

Another one-mile section of the Montour Trail's Bethel Park Branch has been finished from Clifton Road to Logan Road. The new construction includes improved trail heads and ramps to Clifton Road. Grand opening will be June 3.

Overlooked in the hoopla about the new bridge at Ohiopyle State Park was the replacement of the 12-year-old deck and railing on the high bridge on the other side of Fern Cliff Peninsula. The job, which lasted 3 weeks, was done by park personnel last fall.

THE FINE PRINT

The ATA Trail News is produced and distributed quarterly by the Allegheny Trail Alliance for the members and friends of its supporting organizations.

The Allegheny Trail Alliance is a coalition of seven trail-building organizations whose purpose is to assure the construction, maintenance and use of the multi-purpose trail from Pittsburgh, PA to Cumberland, MD, where the trail joins the C&O Canal Towpath to Washington, DC.

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