



Volume 21 Issue 1

Rails to Trails of Central PA Inc.

January February 2016

HAPPY NEW YEAR!

BOX CULVERT TUNNEL



The above picture is similar to what will link Canoe Creek State Park and the Lower Trail.

A LETTER FROM THE PRESIDENT:

Rails to Trails of Central PA would like to thank PennDOT District 9, Blair County Commissioners and Frankstown Township Supervisors for their recent financial commitments to make the Canoe Creek Connector project a reality. This project will connect two great community assets with a safe and enjoyable bike-pedestrian crossing under U.S. Route 22. The Lower Trail will finally be connected to Canoe Creek when the RT 22 highway improvement project completes in 2018. This connector was identified as one of the top ten trail gaps in Pennsylvania's Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan.

At one point this project was on the brink of collapse as we faced a hard deadline and a huge challenge of securing \$300,000 dollars in matching funds to keep the underpass in the highway project. The underpass construction cost of \$1.3 million dollars is a significant safety and recreational investment in our community. PennDOT was able to secure state discretionary funding, reducing our match requirement to \$175,500. Intergovernmental cooperation between Blair County and Frankstown Twp. was then essential and produced an agreement to provide \$150,000 dollars of matching funds and the underpass will now be built. We also want to thank Congressman Bill Shuster, State Senator John Eichelberger and State

Representative Judy Ward and for all of their help and letters of support for this grant.

The late Dean Lower was a major benefactor and instrumental in establishing the 17.5 mile Lower Trail. I did not have the privilege to know Dean but his friends say that he would be very pleased with the project and so are we. Our organization continues to work on extending the trail into Hollidaysburg, Duncansville and on to The National Park Service's 6 thru 10 Trail.

Ed Donahoe
President, Rails to Trails of Central PA Inc.

THIS IS GREAT NEWS!

As you can see from the letter above, 2016 looks like it is shaping up to be a "Happy New Year". Ed Donahoe and Karl King are to be commended on their drive and commitment facilitating and attending many meetings to keep this project moving forward. Our members are also to be commended for we know that many of you did call and write the commissioners, township supervisors and elected officials. Your actions were heard and helped tremendously; thank you.

We are also continuing to work on extending the trail westward to connect to the 6 through 10 Trail. This is not an easy task but we are making progress. Our existing trail looks to be in great shape for the up and coming year with the many repairs that were completed in 2015, (re-decking of bridges, the washout repair, and resurfacing of 2 ½ miles of trail). We also look forward again this year to the Summer Program Series at the Grannas Station. Look for the schedule in the next *Trekker* and on our website at www.rttcpa.org.

ALLEGHENY TRAILRUNNERS INC. PRESENTS: The Dirty Kiln Trail Race

The Dirty Kiln Trail Races are back! Join us April 9th, 2016 for either our 5-mile race or tackle our half-marathon course.

The fourth annual "Dirty Kiln Trail Races at Canoe Creek State Park" brought to you by Allegheny Trailrunners, Inc. will be Saturday, April 9th, 2016! Trail runners will have a choice to run the 5-mile course up Moore's Hill and around the lake. The half-marathon course will go around the park a second time but on a more hilly and challenging half-marathon course! Both courses

have a lot of variety of trails from wide paths, winding singletrack, stream crossings and mud... lots of mud.

The half-marathon starts at 9:00am while the 5-milers start at 9:15am.

Proceeds from the Dirty Kiln Trail Race this year will go towards The Lower Trail – Canoe Creek State Park Extension. This project includes extending the Lower Trail from the Flowing Spring trail head, underneath Route 22 through the construction of an underpass, and into Canoe Creek State Park.

We hope if you are a runner you will come out and participate in this event. If you are not a runner PLEASE come out and support this event by volunteering your time; there will be plenty to help out with. Or come and cheer on the runners. Rails to Trails of Central PA Inc. is extremely grateful that the Allegheny Trailrunners have chosen to support the construction of the underpass connecting the park and the trail. THANKYOU!

For more information on this event visit www.alleghenytrailrunners.com/dirty-kiln-race/

EAGLE WATCHING:



Over the past two years we have been very proud to share photos and articles on the eagles that have been calling the Lower Trail their home. Again this year people have noted seeing activity around the nesting area near Waterstreet. If you are interested in following the life of a nesting pair of eagles you may do so by visiting the Pennsylvania Game Commissions “eagle cam”. The PA Game Commission has a camera on a nesting pair of eagles that regularly nest near Codorus State Park. The commission first livestreamed the nesting pair last year and found that people from around the world tuned into watch. The camera is operational 24/7. Last year, the pair hatched two eggs and raised the eaglets to maturity. At the present time, the pair are still preparing the nest, but eggs will soon follow. Last year, the first egg was laid on Valentine’s Day. If you are interested in viewing the “eagle cam” you may do so by visiting www.pgc.state.pa.us. The home page will come up and then you just click on the picture with the nesting eagles. The website also offers a history of this nest in Hanover as well as a link to “bald eagle nest etiquette”. We hope you take the time to visit this very informative site and follow this year’s family. They are not the nesting pair on the Lower Trail, but it will give you an idea of what is going on in that nest. Enjoy!

TREE OF THE MONTH: AMERICAN BEECH

By Dave Despot

American Beech (*Fagus grandifolia*) is one of my favorite forest trees of the northeastern United States. Beech trees can reach 80 feet tall and 2 ½ feet in diameter on good sites. The native range is the area east of the Mississippi river from southern Ontario south to northern Florida. Trees of this species prefer moist rich soils and can tolerate some shade; however, they do not tolerate soil compaction or root disturbance. As a result, they are usually residents of “true” forests and are rarely found in urban environments except for large parks or estates where they can

grow undisturbed. There are still a few beech trees left at Lakemont Park. I also remember seeing many old beech trees growing in harmony with the sugar maples in the forests around Saint Francis University in Loretto, PA.



Leaves are thin, up to 6 inches long and half as wide, blue green on top and light green below. The thin leaves are almost transparent to sunlight and being present beneath a beech tree with the sun shining through the leaves provides a unique experience as the leaves modify the color of the light. Leaf shape is elliptical to oval with a long pointed tip and coarse teeth on the margins. Twigs are thin with long, narrow sharp pointed buds with prominent scales. Bark on beech trees remains smooth even on mature trunks and stems. The trees flower when the leaves are emerging in the spring and the fruit are produced as small prickly burs which mature in autumn and split into four parts to release their seeds.



The word “beech” comes from the same root as the word “book” and some of the first books were made of thinly split beech wood bound together with strings. Beech has a connection to writing, learning, knowledge, and wisdom. Legend suggests that you can find the face of a tree (unique characteristics of the bark usually associated with a limb scar) and if you study the face and listen with your heart, you can hear the story the tree has to tell. Beech trees often have many faces because the smooth, light colored bark readily displays variations and lines associated with loss of limbs and wounding. On your next outing, see if you can find a beech tree. Who knows what you might learn.

WILD FLOWER WATCH: COMMON MORNING GLORY

By Bob Richers



When our ancestors achieved transcontinental sailing skills, worldwide distribution of earth’s environments began. With today’s global economy the process is accelerated and there is no going back! Ninety-nine percent of introduced species are nonthreatening and actually create a more diverse environment. Unfortunately the remaining one percent are “Genie’s in a bottle” that when freed become invasive species.

When my wife Sue and I purchased our home in 1972 we felt fortunate that the yard was enclosed with a chain link fence. It proved a great asset when we had our children and their numerous pets. Sue claimed most of the fence line for flower beds so I was left with the alley end for a vegetable garden. My only concern was that the fence by my garden looked so barren.

The solution to this problem was purchasing a packet of Common Morning Glory seeds for the amazing price of just 39 cents. I made several mistakes with this choice. First, they proved to be a perennial and second, somewhere in the fine print there must have been a warning “not to feed them after midnight”! For over 40 years now I battle my own personal

invasive species. Maybe now that I've retired I'll weed out and pick all the flowers before additional seeds can be produced. The Morning Glory is distributed worldwide. There are over 1,000 species of these flowering plants from the family Convolvulaceae. The Common has pink and purple-blue flowers that open into full bloom in the morning and start to curl before the flower starts to fade. They seem to grow in all soil types but prefer full sunlight. The plant will vine and grows over 10' if a trellis is provided. The vine intertwines and is fast growing. Flowers are quite abundant and appear from mid-summer into the fall.

The seeds of Morning Glory have a hard seed coat that delays seed germination until late spring. The seeds are considered poisonous, but this varies with the species. A Chinese variety is used as a laxative. The seeds of many species of Morning Glory contain alkaloids such as psychedelic ergonovine and ergine (LSA). Some seeds produce a similar effect to LSD if hundreds are consumed. (That seems like a lot of work to me but maybe I can employ a couple of Hippies to help me out!) The Japanese have cultivated many color versions as ornamental flowers. Other plants contain sulfur in the plant's juice which was used to convert latex into rubber balls.

Better varieties to use in our area are Sunspots & Heavenly Blue which are true annual Morning Glories and will not become invasive.

RAFFLE AND SPRING GATHERING:

You should have received your fifteen raffle tickets with this newsletter. If you did not, please let us know. This year's prizes:

- 1st Prize, \$200.00 Gift Certificate from Spokes-N-Skis
- 2nd Prize, \$100.00 Gift Certificate from Hoss's
- 3rd Prize, \$100.00 Dicks Sporting Goods Gift Certificate
- 4th Prize, \$100.00 Sheetz Convenience Store Gift Certificate
- 5th Prize, \$ 60.00 Field and Stream Gift Certificate
- 6th Prize, \$ 50.00 value outdoor goods from Rothrock Outfitters
- 7th Prize/8th Prize Gift Certificates from Black Dog Café, \$25.00 each.

The prizes were provided this year by: **Spokes-N-Skis, Hoss's, Blair Bicycle Club, Rothrock Outfitters and Black Dog Café.** We greatly appreciate the support of these businesses and we hope, as you shop throughout the year, that you remember to support those businesses that support Rails to Trails. The drawing will once again take place during the Spring Gathering. Mark your calendar for Sunday, May 1st.

The raffle is our major fund raiser, providing a large percentage of our annual operating budget. It is also a way for you to renew your membership. By returning your ticket stubs and money, you extend your membership by one year. This applies to all memberships, even if yours does not expire until January, 2017 for example. By selling the tickets, your expiration date would move to January, 2018. Or, if you do not wish to extend your membership, you may use the ticket sales to give a membership to someone else as a gift.

We understand that not all individuals feel comfortable participating in raffles, let alone fund raisers. If you do not wish

to receive tickets, please let us know. If you did receive tickets and don't wish to participate, please accept our apology. You may either return the tickets or destroy them.

We are certainly grateful for everyone's support, either by renewing your membership as it expires, or by participating in this fund raiser. Tickets again this year are \$2.00 apiece. Ticket stubs and checks may be mailed to Rails-to-Trails, PO Box 592, Hollidaysburg, PA 16648. If you should have any questions, please feel free to contact Vickie Brua at vicbrua@atlanticbb.net or Jennifer Barefoot at 814-695-8521, e-mail at rjsunbrook@verizon.net. Thank you!

CALENDAR OF EVENTS:

Saturday April 9th 2016, Dirty Kiln Trail Race.

Saturday April 16th, Run Baby Run 5K / 1 Mile Walk, call **814-643-3570** for registration form or download the form at www.cpcfornlife.org

Saturday April 23rd, 5k Run, Benefiting the Juniata Valley Elementary School, Alfarata, email Kelly Richner at krichner@jvsd.org for more information.

Sunday May 1st. Spring Gathering. 1 PM: Spring Gathering at the Mt. Etna Trailhead. Once again we will be grilling hamburgers, hotdogs and kielbasa; you just bring your favorite salad/covered dish or desert. Then, following the lunch, we will draw the winners of this year's raffle. Hope to see you there.

MEMBERSHIP FORM

Name: _____

Address: _____

City: _____ State _____ Zip _____

Phone: (____)-_____

E-mail _____

_____ New Membership _____ Renewal

_____ Individual \$15.00

_____ Family \$20.00

_____ Supporting \$50.00

_____ Group \$75.00

I am interested in:

_____ Horses _____ Hiking

_____ Heritage _____ Bicycling

_____ Nature Study _____ Jogging

_____ Other

I would like to help by volunteering for:

Make checks payable to:

Rails-to-Trails of Central PA Inc.
PO Box 592, Hollidaysburg, PA 16648

(814)-832-2400

www.rttcpa.org



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CALENDAR OF EVENTS

Tuesday March 8th	Monthly Board Meeting, 7 PM at the Grannas Station
Saturday April 9th	Dirty Kiln Trail Race benefiting the Canoe Creek Underpass Project.
Tuesday April 12th	Monthly Board Meeting, 7 PM at the Grannas Station
Saturday April 16th	Run Baby Run 5K / 1 Mile Walk, registration 8:30 race at 9:30, Alfarata Trailhead
Saturday April 23rd	5K run benefiting Juniata Valley Elementary School, Alfarata Trailhead.
Sunday May 1st.	Spring Gathering and Raffle Drawing, 1 PM at the Mt. Etna Trailhead.

More details on all events on page 3 of the *Trekker* and on our Web site at www.RTTCPA.org
All are invited to the monthly meetings.

KEEP YOUR ADDRESS CURRENT

This newsletter is mailed 3rd Class Bulk Mail. The Post Office will not forward 3rd Class Bulk Mail. If anything about your address changes, Route Number, Street Numbers, or Zip code, the Trail Trekker will not be forwarded to you. Please keep Rails-to-Trails informed of any address changes by using a post office change of address card or dropping us a note at the following address. Remember, if your mailing address is Highlighted, your membership is about to expire. Please renew quickly and continue to support Rails-to-Trails. Thank You!

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