



Volume 22 Issue 5

Rails to Trails of Central PA Inc.

November/December 2017

GOOD NEWS FOR LOCAL TRAILS:

CANOE CREEK EXTENSION:



On September 14th PennDOT opened bids for the Route 22 project, which includes the underpass connector for the trail to pass under Route 22, allowing the connection of the trail to Canoe Creek State Park. The apparent

low bidder was Plum Contracting of Greensburg. Construction is expected to begin in the spring with trail construction to be complete in 2018. Completion of the entire project is scheduled for late 2019 or 2020. Canoe Creek State Park continues to work on the placement of the trail once it enters the park property.

We plan to have a ground breaking ceremony early next spring. This project has been long in coming and greatly anticipated. It is our hope that the ground breaking will be well attended, sending a message that trail growth is needed and wanted by the people of central Pennsylvania. Watch for more information in up-coming newsletters.

BELLWOOD TRAILS:

Bellwood is working to expand their trails as well. In early November, Bellwood invited their residents to come look over the results of a feasibility study prepared by Pittsburgh-based Mackin Engineering Co. This study proposed a \$2 million plan to construct a 2-mile trail in the Bellwood region for its possible tourism and recreation benefits. The project includes constructing a 2-mile trail that will stretch from Bellwood Borough to Lower Riggles Gap Road.

The Bells Gap Trail has been a GREAT asset to Bellwood. This continued growth of the trails network will not only enhance Bellwood, but all of the surrounding communities.

THE GHOST TOWN TRAIL:

STRONGSTOWN – The official opening of an eight-mile extension of the Ghost Town Trail was celebrated with a ribbon-cutting ceremony in Blacklick Township on Tuesday, September 26th, which was followed by a bike sojourn and walking tour of the rail trail.

The ribbon-cutting at the Vic Miller Road trailhead marked the finishing of the first phase of a \$1.2 million, 15-mile extension of

the trail, which will create a continuous rail-trail loop – the first of its kind nationwide, according to officials with Cambria County Conservation and Recreation Authority, which owns the trail.

The extension expands the trail from its current Rexis branch to North Street in Cardiff and is titled "Stritty's Way," in memory of former CCCRA chairman Tom Strittmatter.

Funded through PennDOT's Transportation Alternatives Program (TAP) Grant with additional funds coming from the Community Initiatives Fund and the Penelec Fund for the Future of Greater Johnstown through the Community Foundation for the Alleghenies, the trail follows the C & I Railroad corridor and, when complete, will cover 44 miles through Cambria and Indiana counties.

"I can't wait for you all to get out and see it," said Cliff Kitner, executive director of the CCCRA.

In the future, Kitner added, the authority plans to add pavilions, picnic tables, signage and restrooms near this area of the trail. A sidewalk connecting the extension to the Rexis branch was also recently finished.

Tom Kakabar, chairman of the CCCRA, said it took perseverance, cooperation and dedication to get to Tuesday's event. "It's a work of art," he said. "But it's also a work in progress."

Tom Sexton, director of the Rails to Trails Conservancy's northeast office in Camp Hill, was the keynote speaker.

Sexton spoke about how paths such as the Ghost Town Trail preserve the region's railroad history and will continuously bolster local businesses. "This is a really good investment," he said. "It's no little thing – it's extremely difficult to find continuous loop trails that are completely made up of rail trails – and you have a great one."

Last year, Connecticut-based American TownsMedia ranked the Ghost Town Trail seventh on its "Best Hiking Trails in the U.S." Funding is being sought to finish the remaining 7.5 miles that would complete the trail's 32-mile and 16-mile loops.

The CCCRA is also exploring options to connect the Ghost Town Trail with the county-owned Duman Lake Park and working with Northern Cambria officials seeking a three-mile trail from Carrolltown to Patton.

The authority also manages the Jim Mayer Riverswalk Trail and the Path of the Flood Trail.

Jocelyn Brumbaugh is a reporter for the Tribune-Democrat. Follow her on Twitter @JBrumbaughTD.

HOLIDAY GATHERING: Monday December 11th.



“On the morning of May 30, 1893, a circus train convoy chock full of lions, elephants and camels fatefully rounded a bend of a rural Pennsylvania mountain.

The conductor was going 40 miles an hour, and the Walter L. Main circus flew off its rails. Fourteen of its 17 cars tumbled down a 30-foot ravine, piling on top of each other. Hundreds of animals streamed out and into the surrounding forest.



The circus had come to town unexpectedly in Tyrone, Pennsylvania.”

Have we piqued your interest? Please plan to come to this year’s Holiday Gathering. We are honored to have historian, geologist, and writer Paula Zitzler as our guest speaker. Paula has extensively researched the famous Circus Train Wreck and has authored a book on it as well, “*Unscheduled Stop: The Town of Tyrone and the Wreck of Walter L. Main Circus Train*”. She will have paperback copies available for sale, (great holiday gift idea).

Plan to come. You are welcome to bring friends and family as well. The Holiday Gathering, will be held at **7 PM on Monday December 11th**. There will be light refreshments and holiday treats to eat. (If you wish to bring along some of your favorite holiday cookies to share, that is most welcome.)

The gathering will be held at the Hoss’s Corporate Offices in Duncansville behind Marzoni’s. Please use the **REAR ENTRANCE** at the back of the building.

HOSS’S COMMUNITY FUNDRAISER:



December 11th is not only the Holiday Gathering, but also the day Rails to Trails is again partnering with Hoss’s Community Fundraising Program. All you have to do is clip the coupon from Page 3 of the *Trekker* and go to Hoss’s on Patchway Drive in Duncansville.

Present your coupon when ordering lunch or dinner and Hoss’s will donate 20% of the cost of your group’s meals to Rails to Trails. Now how easy is that? You get a great meal and help out Rails to Trails at the same time.

You can eat at any time during the day. If you plan to come to the Holiday Gathering, just allow enough time to eat and then come over to the Corporate Offices, (which are located just behind Marzoni’s restaurant.) We will be using the REAR entrance at the back of the building.

THE NEW ADIRONDACK SHELTERS:

By Bob Richers

Some of you may be wondering about the purpose of the two new structures constructed recently along the trail at Mt. Etna and the Alexandria Trailheads. They are our version of Adirondack Shelters for hikers using the Mid-State Trail section to the trail and the through bikers using the Trans-Allegheny Bike System. The shelters offer a place to spend the night off the ground and out of the weather. The locations at the trailheads also contain rest room facilities in close proximity. The only thing lacking now is a water supply and, hopefully in the future, a grant for pumps can be awarded.

Both shelters were Eagle Scout projects. Marshall Kuntz from Troop 31 in Hollidaysburg began the shelter at the Mt. Etna trailhead in the fall of 2016 and completed it in April of this year. Devin Deihl from troop 25 in Huntingdon began his shelter at the Alexandria trailhead this summer and completed it in September.

Both scouts organized these projects from the planning stage through completion. They also raised the needed funds and supervised the labor for these Adirondack Shelters. There were over 300 hours of labor and \$1,600 in materials used per shelter. The project construction was excellent and the shelters will last for many years to come. To both scouts I offer a sincere “Thank You for a job well done”!

Adirondack shelters are being constructed along many of the longer rails to trails systems in this part of the country. During a bike ride from Garret to the Big Savage Tunnel along the Great Allegheny Passage on Sunday October 1st, we encountered 25 different bikers, with saddle bags backed and heading from Pittsburgh to Washington, D.C. A dry place to spend the night enhances the biking experience and attracts the long distant biker. As they say, “build it and they will come”!

TREE OF THE MONTH: SWEET GUM

By Dave Despot

Sweet gum (*Liquidambar styraciflua*) is a medium to large deciduous tree (50 to 75 feet), and is one of the most common hardwood trees in the southeastern United States. The native range extends south to central Florida, but the northern edge of the range is northern Virginia, and along the coast, New Jersey. To the west, sweet gum trees are naturalized as far west as Illinois and Texas. Sweet gum performs well in central Pennsylvania when planted as an ornamental; however it is apparently not competitive enough in this climate to become naturalized to any extent.



Sweet gum trees tend to be symmetrical in shape and somewhat oval in outline. Twigs are shiny green to brown and may have corky wings. The bark is light brown tinged with red and develops deep ridges and furrows with age. Leaves have five or more points (lobes) creating a star shape. The leaf shape is described as palmately lobed (five or more lobes originating from a single point, spreading like fingers on a hand). Leaf margins are finely toothed;

color is shiny dark green in summer, turning red, yellow, or purple in fall.



Seeds are borne in spiny, long-stemmed balls which remain intact after seeds are dispersed. If anyone is familiar with the animated movie version of the Dr. Seuss classic *Horton Hears a Who*, a fruit ball from a sweet gum tree starts the whole scenario when, after being dislodged by a drop of water, it rolls into a cave and disturbs the speck that contains Whoville.

Lumber produced from sweet gum trees is heavy, satiny, close grained, but not particularly strong. It warps badly when drying. It is however, an important wood for use in making plywood. Resin produced when the tree is wounded is a product similar to turpentine but with a pleasant smell. This resin is sometimes called liquid amber, which is where the Latin name for the genus comes from. While you may not find this species along a trail in the forest, look for it in parks, plantings around commercial buildings, and along suburban streets where it is often planted.

“HIKING ETIQUETTE 101”:

Throughout the year we receive questions, complaints, suggestions as to proper manners, etiquette, use, etc...on the trail. Recently, founder of wonderfulwellies.co.uk. Will Tottle emailed Rails to Trails about just this. He felt with the huge number of hikers/walkers there are across the world now, it would be beneficial to all to create the “ultimate guide” to inform trail users, in particular beginners and casual hikers, of proper trail etiquette. So he did just that writing, [Hiking Etiquette 101: The 12 Trail Rules you Should Know](#).

It is well written, just a little long for the newsletter. But with google and a click of your mouse, your computer will take you right to his site. It is well worth the read.

JANURARY UPCOMMING ELECTION:

Each year in January, we must elect five members to the Board of Directors. Rails-to-Trails of Central Pa Inc. is managed by 15 elected members in good standing in the corporation. Board members serve a three year commitment with five being elected each year. The Board members whose terms are up this year are: Victoria Brua, Ed Donahoe, Peggy Goodman, Nelson Horton and Ethan Imhoff.

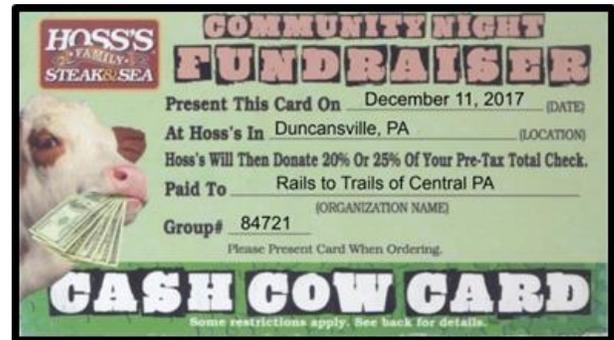
You may ask, “What does being a Board member entail?” Article III. A. of our by-laws states: “The ability of the Organization to successfully accomplish its purpose as defined in Article II is contingent on the active interest and participation of its Board Members. 1. This entails involvement in the planning, organization and carrying out of scheduled activities throughout the year. 2. Board members are encouraged and expected to attend scheduled meetings on a regular basis.” To keep this organization strong and moving forward, it is vital that board members are able to fulfill the two objectives listed above.

If you feel you meet these criteria and are interested, or know someone who is, please consider running for a position on the

Board. Do not always assume someone else will do it. The Lower Trail is a GREAT trail, but we need committed people to keep the organization strong. To nominate someone for the Board, contact Bruce Sheehe by email at bruce_sheehe@msn.com, or call 814-215-9680.

We apologize for the cancelation of our last trail program, “Stories and Stuff” on October 15. Due to circumstances beyond our control and our speaker’s control, we needed to cancel. We hope to reschedule it for the spring of next year.

Hoss’s Coupon:



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CALENDAR OF EVENTS

Monday December 11th	Holiday Gathering 7 PM, Hoss's Corporate Offices. Use Rear Entrance
Monday December 11th	Fund Raiser with Hoss's, coupon on page 3. 20% donated to Rails to Trails.
Tuesday January 9th	Monthly Board Meeting, 7 PM at the Grannas Station
Tuesday February 13th	Monthly Board Meeting, 7 PM at the Grannas Station

For more information on the above events please see page 2 and 3 of the newsletter or visit our website

KEEP YOUR ADDRESS CURRENT

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