



TRAIL WORK AHEAD!



Some long-awaited construction work is about to begin on the Lower Trail.

George S. Hann and Son, Inc. of Fort Littleton, the same company that built the original eleven miles of the Lower Trail, is scheduled to begin work the second week of September on a number of upgrades. The work will include the re-decking of two bridges: the first near Dilling's farm about a mile and a half from the Williamsburg Trailhead; the second near the Mt. Etna Trailhead. Once the first bridge is completed, work will start on paving the trail from Dilling's Bridge to the Covedale Trailhead. The company will also make improvements to the Mt. Etna parking lot and construct a new pavilion at Mt. Etna. The total cost of the work is just under \$375,000, to be paid for through a Transportation Enhancement award provided by Congressman Bill Shuster.

The re-decking of the Dilling's Farm Bridge will not interrupt traffic on the trail – riders and walkers will be directed to use the equestrian half of the bridge, which won't be affected by the work. The re-decking of the Mt. Etna Bridge will require a detour onto Fox Run Road, as was used during the work on the other bridge at Mt. Etna. The extension of the paving will require the closure of the trail between Dilling's Bridge and the Covedale Trailhead for two to three days.

Re-decking of the bridge at Dilling's Farm is to be completed by September 18th while the rest of the work is scheduled for completion by October 13th. Meanwhile, bids are to be opened on September 11th for the restoration of the floodwall washed away at Water Street in 2004 by Hurricane Ivan.

CANOE CREEK TIE-IN EXTENSION:

It has long been planned to connect Canoe Creek State Park and the Lower Trail. This idea has been in the works since Terry Wentz was the park superintendent in the 1980's and the original 11 miles of the Lower Trail was built. When the Lower Trail was extended to Flowing Spring, plans for the redesign of the Route 22 intersection called for crossing under the highway to connect the trail to the park. Due to delays in the Route 22 upgrade (nearly 16 years,) the extension of the trail into the park remains on hold. The delay resulted from US Fish and Wildlife Service regulations protecting the Indiana Bat. To address these

concerns, original design plan for the highway has been scaled back and continuing the trail into the park is no longer feasible.

The good news is that there is now a movement spearheaded by Friends of Canoe Creek State Park to get a connection as the Route 22 upgrade is moving forward. An online petition is being circulated to garner support from our government officials for closing the gap for pedestrian traffic between Canoe Creek State Park and the Lower Trail in 2016 when PennDOT undertakes the reconstruction of the Route 22/Turkey Valley Road intersection.

Here is a link to the online petition that, if you agree, you can sign (unless you have already signed the paper petition):

Close the Gap! Support and fund connecting Canoe Creek State Park with the Lower Trail:

<http://www.change.org/petitions/penn-dot-federal-state-and-local-elected-officials-close-the-gap-support-and-fund-connecting-canoe-creek-state-park-with-the-lower-trail>

Connecting these two great recreational areas would not only be a great asset to this area, but it would make it much safer for cyclists and walkers to enjoy both attractions. Please help out and support this very worthy venture.

WASPS, NO THEIR CICADA KILLERS:

We have received a number of emails and calls concerning the "ground hornets/wasps under the split rail fencing at the Flowing Spring Trailhead. These are not hornets or wasps but **Cicada Killers**.



The name alone sounds worse than any bee, but these insects are far less a problem than wasps or hornets. These insects do just as their name implies; they hunt and kill Cicadas. The females do the nest building, hunting, and egg laying. The males often stay in groups, vigorously challenging one another for position in breeding order; they will only fight other males or insects, posing no danger to humans for they cannot sting. The females can, but rarely do, sting people; their sting is meant to paralyze Cicadas.

They are ground-burrowing wasps that like well drained sandy soils. Females can share a burrow, digging their own nest cells off of the main tunnel. The burrow is anywhere from 10 to 20 inches deep. After digging their burrow, the female flies off to

find cicadas. Once finding a cicada she paralyzes it with her sting, then carries it upside down, flying back to the burrow. This is very tiring for her for the cicada can weigh over twice her weight. She then puts one or more cicadas in the nest cell, deposits an egg on a cicada and closes the cell with dirt. The male eggs are laid on a single cicada but female eggs are given 2 or 3 cicadas, for the female wasp is twice the size of the males and requires more food. The egg hatches in 1 or 2 days and the cicadas serve as food for the larvae for about 2 weeks. There is only one generation per year and no adults overwinter. Overwintering occurs as a mature larva within an earth-coated cocoon. In the spring, pupation occurs in the next cell and lasts 25 to 30 days. Adults emerge around late June and early July and die off mid-September or early October.

So you see these vicious sounding insects are really very beneficial to the trees, helping to keep the cicada population down. Cicadas feed on deciduous trees. Now that we know a little more about these insects, we hope your rides on the trail are a little more relaxed knowing these “killers” are only looking for cicadas.

GRANNAS LANDSCAPING:

Many, many thank yous to Ginny Landis for planning, developing and guiding the landscaping project in front of the Grannas Station. The new plantings greatly add to the attractiveness of the station. Ginny would like to extend a special thank you to Joan Plummer and Arlene Ormsby, who helped with



the planting as well as the donation of a number of plants from their own gardens. Also thank you to Mike Vargo and Dick Landis for picking up the mulch and spreading it. This landscaping was designed to be low maintenance, yet very pleasing to the eye. We hope everyone who passes by the station takes a moment to enjoy the beauty of this new landscaping.



BOY SCOUT PROJECTS UPDATE:

By Bob Richers



In 2011, we were approached by Scoutmaster Steve Weir, noting that four of the scouts from troop 30 were interested in doing Eagle Scout projects along the Lower Trail. Last summer, the final 2 scouts finished their projects. The troop number has also changed to 31 due to a sponsor change.

At the recent Klondike derby, 3 of the patrols from troop 31 finished 1st, 2nd and 3rd out of 19 participating patrols. The 1st place patrol included Matt Keefer and Addison Hays who completed Eagle projects on the trail. The 2nd place patrol included Brennan Nale and Nick Centar who also completed Lower Trail Eagle projects. The 3rd place patrol received the district iron patrol designation for the top patrol of the 2013 Season. This troop over achieves year after year. In the spirit of “being all that you can be,” their Eagle Scout candidates receive

nearly 80 merit badges and many other awards on their path through scouting. Tremendous job well done!

Hazel Bilka also reports that yet another scout from troop 29 completed a project along the Bells Gap Trail. My unofficial count shows that this is at least the 5th project completed by a scout from another outstanding organization.

Daniel Hollen from Troop 29 constructed a 12’ by 16’ storage building in 2012 at the Bells Gap trailhead. The building features a concrete floor and includes a garage door in this first-rate project. With the awarding of a new lawn tractor thru a grant from the Blair County Commissioners, this building will prove to be the “right place at the right time!”

Addison Hayes from troop 31 assembled a wonderful memorial kiosk commemorating Terry Wentz. Terry was a charter member, officer, and board member of Rails to Trails of Central PA Inc. He was also the superintendent of Canoe Creek State Park and an active member of the Juniata Valley Audubon Society. We all still miss him dearly. In keeping with Terry’s love of nature, the kiosk also highlights the Blue Warbler. Four other signs that Addison erected along the trail feature additional information on bird life.

Brennan Nale from Troop 31 completed the repair of the old campground pavilion #5. The roof was replaced and the plywood truss plates were replaced with metal plates.. Everything received a coat of paint. Dead trees around the site were removed, landscaping was performed and several trees were added. Great job!

As a private non-profit organization, Rails to Trails of Central PA Inc. is dependent on volunteer labor. Thanks to the Boy Scouts of America and other groups, our work load is lighter and back-logged projects are being addressed.

WILD FLOWER OF THE MONTH:

Yellow Goats Beard

By Bob Richers

A nice addition to any wild flower garden is Yellow Goat’s Beard. It is a member of the Aster Family and is sometimes called Meadow Salsify. It is closely related to the Oyster Plant, which is grown for its roots, but has purple flowers.



Goat’s Beard is native of Euro/Asia but is now well established throughout North America. The plant is biennial, sending up a single flowering stem in the first year and 1 foot to 3 foot multi flowering stems the following year. The stems are rounding, hairless and slightly enlarged near each leaf. The leaves are 12 inches long by 1 inch wide at the base to a point at the tip. Both stems and leaves contain white latex.

The flowers open in the morning but close back up by noon. Each flower head is 2 inches wide, yellow with smaller ray florets centered by larger exterior florets. The flower has 8 green bracts which completely conceal the flower when closed. The blooming occurs from spring to mid-summer lasting 4 to 6 weeks. The seed head, which helps in plant identification, resembles a Dandelion, but is about as large as a tennis ball. It

may be best to collect most of the seeds in a plastic bag so that your garden doesn't become over run by the plant.

The herbal gardening folks believe that the juice of the plant is beneficial for upset stomachs. The roots can be eaten like parsnips. Leaves and young stalks, including early unopened flower stalks can be eaten like asparagus or used as pot-herbs to flavor soups. With that said, since the plant contains latex, would it be any different than eating paint chips???

IN THEIR OWN WORDS:

The following messages were posted on the bulletin board at Mt. Etna.

6/14/2014: "I am riding 10 miles today and I am 9."

6/14/2014: "Adam made his first bike ride today on the trail. He rode just over 8 miles. His dad is very proud. Happy Father's Day."

Undated: "Happy Father's Day everyone! First time on the trail and I love it."

6/17/2014: "Hot on the trail today - 90 degrees. It's great workout. - Cindy"

6/17/2014: "It was a long trip but it was a fun trip. - Jake 6 yrs old & Grand mom 66 yrs old."

6/17/2014: "Lots of turtle nests on trail."

6/22/2014: "I biked 10 miles. It was fun and so awesome!"

Undated: "Celebrating my husband's 43rd birthday w/a 10 mile family bike ride ..."

6/28/2014: "Tomorrow I turn 62. Today I rode the trail from one end to the other and back. Great ride, beautiful day. Luce and Moses."

7/04/2014: "Happy 4th of July 2014. Jackie & Sidney. Lower Trail"

7/05/2014: "From: Alexandria To: Mt. Etna. Trail is still as beautiful as always. K & C Brooks."

7/08/2014: "Ellie - Pat. I saw a red bird, cardinal. I am 7 years old and from Reading, PA. I am riding 10 miles today with my poppy and grammy. Goodbye! P.S. I just saw a baby rabbit!"

7/08/2014 : "I rode my 32 miles today. Sprinkled for about 1/2 mile but was refreshing. Good to see Martha and Daryl back. Great ride. Betty"

7/22/2014: "End to end & back today for my 1st time - loving it! Thank you to all the volunteers who maintain this trail! It is much appreciated. Samantha."

7/23/2014: "Last week, while biking below Etna, Klause, a biker from Huntingdon, stopped for something on the trail. To his amazement 2 small fawns ran over to him and kept looking

him over. What a great experience! They wanted to stay with him. They must have lost their mother and were checking him out. (Sad)."

CALENDAR OF EVENTS:

Sunday Riders/Sunday Strollers: In an effort to make more people aware of the potential to extend and connect a network of trails for active transportation in Central Pennsylvania, you are invited to join interested individuals and families in very informal fun walks. We gather in Canal Park, near the intersection of Bridge and Canal Streets in Alexandria at 3 p.m. the third Sunday of every month (except for holidays.) Participants select either the short route (3.8 miles) highlighted in orange or the long route (8.7 miles) highlighted in green. Both routes end at Canal Park around 5 p.m. For more information visit www.facebook.com/sundayriderssundaystrollers or contact Valerie Burnett at RTTvolunteers@gmail.com

5K Events: In September, there are many 5K events scheduled on the trail to benefit some very worthwhile causes, Big Brothers/Big Sisters, Fallen Firefighters, Organ Transplants and Special Olympics. All of the events begin at the Alfarata Trailhead. Please visit our website, www.rttcpa.org and visit the calendar for more information on these events. There are dates, times, and contact information available.

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

Sunday August 17th	Sunday Riders/Sunday Strollers , 3 PM Canal Park Alexandria
Sunday September 7th	5k Big Brothers/Big Sisters , Alfarata Trailhead
Tuesday September 9th	Monthly Board Meeting , 7 PM Grannas Station
Saturday September 20th	5K Run , Alfarata Trailhead
Sunday September 21st	Sunday Riders/Sunday Strollers , 3 PM Canal Park Alexandria
Sunday September 21st	5K Run , Alfarata Trailhead
Sunday October 5th	5k Run , Alfarata 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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