



Volume 25 Issue 3

Rails to Trails of Central PA Inc.

April / May 2020

COVID-19 - LOWER TRAIL-CHANGES:

As in your everyday life, COVID-19 has also resulted in changes for Rails to Trails of Central PA.

First and foremost, it is our hope that this newsletter finds everyone HEALTHY and SAFE. This pandemic has made us announce some changes.

At the present time the Lower Trail will remain **OPEN**. With that said, we are operating under the CDC guidelines. We are asking that all trail users practice SOCIAL DISTANCING. At the present time that distance is a minimum of 6 feet.

Porta Potties have been removed. The vault toilets are locked, as has been done at other rail trails and state parks.

The April and May monthly board meetings have been canceled. Business that needs attention is being done via internet. At the present time, there are no programs planned. When conditions change we will plan some late summer/early fall programs on the trail.

The **Spring Gathering has been POSTPONED** and will be rescheduled in fall.

NOT CHANGED:

The **RAFFLE WILL BE HELD**. We will hold the drawing on May 3rd as stated on the tickets. Winners will be notified via phone or mail. The winners will be posted on our Facebook page and published in the next newsletter. So if you have not yet mailed your ticket stubs and check back, please mail them to Rails to Trails of Central PA Inc., PO

Box 592 Hollidaysburg, PA 16648 so they will reach us by May 1st.

Please keep updated to any other notices or changes through the website, www.rttcpa.org or via our Facebook page.

Thank you and stay SAFE!!!

ADVICE FROM DCNR and BEING OUTDOORS:

Pennsylvania Department of Conservation and Natural Resources (DCNR) Secretary Cindy Adams Dunn reminded Pennsylvanians that being outdoors is good health care and self-care, but recommendations for social distancing to slow the spread of the coronavirus still apply.

“During this time of significant changes to our daily routines, it’s clear that our need for and appreciation of nature is greater than ever.” Dunn said. “Outdoor activities are a great idea to relieve stress and as immunity boosters, but they should not include exposure to high-touch surfaces or other groups of people — we need to spread out.”

Dunn noted the best advice to slow the spread of COVID-19 is to stay at home. Engaging in outdoor activity, such as walking, hiking, or running is allowed if social distancing is maintained.

Some tips for avoiding groups of people outdoors include:

- If you have a yard, spend time there outdoors every day.
- If possible, take a walk around your neighborhood with the people in your family, as long as you can stay six feet away from neighbors.
- If you decide to leave your neighborhood, plan for several alternate locations, so if you arrive at your first one and there are crowds, you can move on.
- Choose a less busy time of day, such as early morning.

- Find a local park or trail that offers enough space for social distancing. Pennsylvania has more than 6,000 local parks that are identified on an interactive map.
- Some municipalities have closed local parks to protect visitors and employees, so check the status of the park before you go. If the park is open, bathrooms and water fountains likely will not be, so plan ahead.
- There also are more than 12,000 miles of trails in Pennsylvania, most of which remain accessible during this period. Find a nearby trail at trails.dcnr.pa.gov.

State and local parks, state forests, and trails are seeing record numbers of visitors, with more anticipated as the weather turns warmer and fishing season begins. From March 17 to 25, Presque Isle State Park in Erie saw an average 165 percent increase in visitation from the same dates last year.

State park and forest facilities such as restrooms, playgrounds, and all overnight accommodations are closed, and staff is limited. The public can access lands and trails.

Be respectful of natural places by practicing Leave No Trace ethics:

- Avoid crowded parking lots and trailheads – find a different spot.
- Use the bathroom before you visit.
- Bring a bag and carry out your trash.
- Take your trash home with you, as there is limited staff emptying trash cans.
- Clean up after pets and carry out the bags.

Pennsylvania has 121 state parks, and 20 forest districts.

ADDITIONAL HELPFUL INFORMATION:

Another interesting article for runners and cyclists can be found at: <https://medium.com/@jurgenthoele/belgian-dutch-study-why-in-times-of-covid-19-you-can-not-walk-run-bike-close-to-each-other-a5df19c77d08> it is a Belgian-Dutch Study titled, “Why in times of COVID-19 you should not walk/run/bike close behind each other.” It talks about distances that should be maintained when running and cycling.

2019 EAGLE SCOUT PROJECTS:

By Bob Richers

We saw two Eagle Scout projects completed on the Lower Trail this past year.

Noa Hoover from troop 31, Duncansville, PA rebuilt and repaired pavilion 7 along the old campground up from Grannas Station. One of the issues with these old pavilions

was that the old plywood truss plates proved to be tasty to porcupines. Most were almost completely eaten away and weakened the structural integrity of the shelters. Some of the wood was in poor condition and the old metal roofing was rusting away.

Noa replaced the truss plates with metal plates, replaced the bad wood including the 4 support posts and added a new metal roof. He also added a bike rack and a first ever horse hitching station which, according to the corresponding horse manure, seems to be popular! The scouts from troop 31 (formerly troop 30) have refurbished all of the pavilions along the section of trail from Flowing Spring to Grannas Station. Great job guys!

William Black from troop 25 out of Huntingdon, PA replaced the bulletin board at the Flowing Spring trail head.

Some history on the bulletin board at that site: In years past, a nice aluminum board was to be installed at Flowing Spring by the Hollidaysburg Senior Class volunteers. The materials for the project were left on site overnight and were stolen. A temporary board was constructed instead.

I saw a bulletin board using a canoe as the roof which had a little free library at one end. It was located at Petticoat Junction Campground along the Pine Creek trail and I thought it would be a neat replacement for Flowing Spring, especially with the popular kayak launch site also located there.

William incorporated the design from the pictures on Pine Creek’s board and included our first little free library. He removed the temporary bulletin board, and now we have a new open-faced replacement in place. Hopefully, vandals will leave our postings, books and magazines alone. Of course, with a little free library, the books and magazines are on a “take one – leave one” basis. Enjoy readers!

WILDFLOWER WATCH: SPRING BEAUTY

By Bob Richers



Last Spring while riding on the Western Maryland Trail west of Hancock MD, I spotted and stopped to look at a wildflower. I thought it might be Common Wood Sorrel but on further observation, the leaves were wrong. After a quick check in my Audubon wildflower field guide, I determined that it was actually Spring Beauty.

This perennial wildflower is only 3 to 6 inches tall. It has a light green to reddish green flowering stem. The plant has basal and a pair of cauline leaves. They are 2 to 5

inches long and have a slightly succulent appearance. The stem ends with a 1/3" flowers. These consist of 5 petals, 2 green sepals, 5 stamens with pink antlers and a pistil with a tripartite style. The petals are white with light to deep pink stripes. The flower has a pleasant floral odor. The blooming season can last 1 to 2 months.

Spring Beauty prefers dappled sunlight during the spring. It grows in slightly dry to moist loamy and organic soil. This wildflower is a sure sign that the growing season has begun and that the local woodlands are full of flowers. If these plants and other wildflowers are absent, it could be due to severe degradation from plowing or other heavy machinery. It will adapt to semi-shaded lawns if mowing is delayed. The flower and plant will fade away by mid-summer.

Insects, mostly bees and flies, pollinate this beauty. The corm root system is dug up and eaten by white-footed mice and chipmunks. The foliage is browsed on by deer. Some human consumption of the corms happens, but due to their small size, it is rather impractical. They are listed in the springtime section of the Canoe Creek State Park Wildflower Guide.

WESTERN MARYLAND RAIL TRAIL EXTENSION:

By Bob Richers

My wife Sue and I look forward to the opening of new trails and extensions to existing trails that we frequent. The long-anticipated opening of the Western Maryland Trail west of Hancock MD finally happened in June of 2019. This trail now has 8 miles going east and 16 1/2 miles heading west from Hancock. After being an independent entity, the trail became a part of the Fort Fredrick State Park a decade or so ago. The trail is paved black top, but unfortunately has numerous root issues which have progressed to being downright uncomfortable. To be honest, it is where the paved sections of the Lower Trail will be years down the road. But it is a great early season ride when the local limestone trails are soft and muddy.

The 4 1/2 mile newly paved extensions goes to Little Orleans and stops at a closed bridge that extends across the Potomac River into West Virginia. The undeveloped trail on the far side of the river goes 8 miles to the Paw Paw tunnel section of the C&O Canal. The state of West Virginia currently has no resources to develop the trail.

The extension by-passed the Indigo Tunnel due to the summer roosting of 5 species of bats. The environmental survey seems to have been completed prior to the arrival of the White Nosed Syndrome, which unfortunately, would have greatly reduced those bat populations.

I looked into the gated tunnels western entrance and noted that the high ceiling is supported with large timbers. The

entrance section, which looked similar to a barn roof truss support, could have been isolated from the biking section of the tunnel. This could have been a win-win for riders and the bats. But it is what it is.

Currently there are 2 concrete Z shaped bridges installed to take riders down and back up from the C&O Canal Path. This detour is over a mile long and the path in this area is rocky, rutted and is a mess whenever it rains. The 184 mile C&O Canal Path should be resurfaced on a 5 to 8 year cycle but unfortunately this doesn't happen.

Still the extension is more miles to ride, but it could have been so much more.

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CALENDAR OF EVENTS

Due to the COVID-19 VIRUS THERE WILL BE NO MONTHLY BOARD MEETINGS IN APRIL MAY AND POSSIBLY JUNE.

**THE SPRING GATHERING HAS BEEN POSTPONED
RAFFLE DRAWING WILL BE DONE MAY 3RD WINNERS WILL BE NOTIFIED.**

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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