



LOWER TRAIL BRIDGE CLOSURE
(Large bridge between the Williamsburg & Mount Etna Trailheads)

On Friday August 29th we received word from our engineers....

“Based on our inspection of the bridge and its condition, the bridge is not structurally adequate and should be closed to all access immediately.”

It could not have come at a worse time: beginning of Labor Day Weekend, the start of the beautiful fall season, but when is there ever a time and place for BAD NEWS? It was the responsibility of the Rails to Trails Board to make the immediate and responsible decision to close the bridge.

Importance of getting this bridge back open.

This is not a stand-alone bridge This bridge is more important than just the Lower Trail. (Even though we feel that that is extremely important.) This bridge is important regionally, state-wide and nationally. What once was just a bridge on the original 11 miles of the Lower Trail has already become a bridge of multiple trail systems. It is part of the Trans Allegheny Trails System, Bicycle Route G, (this was part of ex-Governor Tom Ridge’s administration’s development of 6 trails crossing Pennsylvania), the Mid

State Hiking trail beginning in upper New York through Pennsylvania down into Maryland and recognized federally as part of the National 911 Memorial Trail. Getting this bridge open is vitality important to the developing trail system, locally, state-wide and nationally.

We understand how this bridge looking so massive and strong, designed to carry large locomotives pulling railcars can now be structurally inadequate to carry hikers and bikers. The problem is not the weight of what is crossing the bridge but in the deterioration of one supporting pier.



The problem is that the one pier, (where you see the two stones dropped down,) This has allowed for the fill in the center of that pier to

scour out leaving a large void in the inside of this pier. If the other face stones drop or move it would be like a game of “jenga”. If the pier fails, the bridge fails.



With that said, we are working with engineers looking at all possible ways to stabilize/repair this issue to get the bridge reopened. We first must find the best solution for this repair. Once we

know what that is we will need to obtain the proper permits for the work and get a cost estimate. We then need to find the funds for the repair. Looking to grants takes a major amount of time, (finding the grant, applying, waiting to hear if we are awarded a grant, then a period to receive the

funding). In many cases, this is a one to 2-year period (or longer.) This is time we may not have depending on future high waters, flooding, ice flows etc... We could have the repairs done in a much quicker time frame and at a lesser cost if we could secure private donations. The down-side here is in this economy, it is very difficult to raise funds privately. With that said, we are establishing a fund earmarked for this project. No matter what, we will need private money, whether we raise the funds to do the repair ourselves or if we will still need funds for a match for any grants we are able to secure.

Any donation made to Rails to Trails of Central PA is tax deductible as the organization is a 501©3 non-profit corporation.

With that said, please know that our top priority is to resolve this issue as promptly as possible. This is not going to be an easy or quick fix. Rails to Trails of Central PA has overcome large obstacles in the past. The very first was purchasing an abandoned rail corridor and turning it into the only privately owned, free of charge rail trail totally maintained by volunteers in the United States back in 1993. Second was winning court battles against adjacent landowners. Third was not one but several devastating floods. This is a very large obstacle but we have a strong board, dedicated volunteers and members as well as a community that has supported us in the past. We will find a solution, and we will get this problem fixed. Hopefully sooner than later....time is our enemy now.

We will keep you updated

AMERICAN LOTUS

By *Bob Richers*



On a July, outing to the Western Maryland Rail Trail in Hancock Maryland my wife and I discovered a large patch of American Lotus growing in the C&O Canal across from the trailhead. We had spotted them at a distance at the eastern end of the Hancock and for years assumed that they were Pond Lilies.

Due to a severe tree root problem along the eastern section of the trail, we always rode west. Last fall the trail, which was taken over by the Fort Fredrick State Park about a decade ago, had the roots removed and blacktop patched. Later in the year 22 miles of trail was repaved and the berms were leveled. "Sweet ride!"

It had been years since we rode east and as we passed the water plants, I noticed that they were not lilies. Sue whipped out her cell phone, pulled up a plant identification app, and ID them as American Lotus. They were in full bloom and up close, they were quite magnificent.

Lotus begins the year with one to two inch floating leaves. As the season continues, some leaves extend out of the water on up to three-foot stems and look like an umbrella turned up. This native water plant is a member of the Water Lily Family.

Lotus is distributed from Florida and Texas north to Minnesota. There are some plants throughout the eastern states but are more numerous west of the Appalachians. There is a pink Asian Lotus that escaped from cultivation and has leaves that extend to five feet.

The flower, which blooms from June to September, is pale yellow and is six to ten inches in size. It has it's own stem and has a most pleasant scent. Lotus has several layers of petals and sepals. The center of the blossom has a convex receptacle that looks like a showerhead. It has many cavities containing pistils. Not that I admit to any federal crimes, but a flower lasted several days in a water glass back at our campground.

The American Lotus is a year-round food source. The young leaves can be prepared like spinach. Immature seeds can be eaten whole, raw or cooked. The kernels from ripe seeds can be roasted and eaten like nuts or ground into flower. The tubers, which can be as large as an arm, can be roasted like sweet potatoes.

On a trip to Pymatuning, in late August (west of the Appalachians), we were delighted to find hundreds of acres of Lotus still in bloom along the Spillway Trail!

RAFFLE WINNERS:

1. Ashley Gildea Spokes-N-Skis
of Hollidaysburg
2. Janet Myers G-3 Physical Therapy
of Williamsburg
3. Noel Miller Morrisons Cove Memorial Park
of Altoona
4. Perry Smith Hoss's
of Huntingdon
5. Scott Harker Blue Gill's
of Mt. Lebanon
6. Jay White Mayfields
of Huntingdon
7. Matt Roberts Allegheny Creamery & Crepes
of Williamsburg

8. Margaret Rhoades Country View Notary
of Hollidaysburg
9. Mary Emeigh US Hotel
of Duncansville
10. Mike Ergler US Hotel
of Hollidaysburg
11. Steve Seltzer The Dream
of State College
12. Michael Gingerich The Dream
State College Diane
Gingerich
13. Becky Hurliman Prime Sirloin
of Hollidaysburg
14. Steve Gildea Prime Sirloin
of Hollidaysburg
15. Joan Kaylor Beech Tree Café
of Altoona
16. Bruce Brower Freedom Excursions
of Hollidaysburg
17. John Hartsock Beech Tree Café
of Hollidaysburg
18. Dennis Sloppy Jimmy John's
of Woodland
19. Diane England Biddle's Brewing
of Williamsburg
20. Craig Praul Belly Busters
of Hollidaysburg
21. Ellyn Gildea Belly Busters
of Hollidaysburg
22. Louis Miceli Dinner 22
of Port Matilda
23. Scott Harkins Dinner 22
of Mt. Lebanon
24. Steve Seltzer Best Way Pizza
of State College
25. Mike Vargo Best Way Pizza
of Huntingdon
26. Denny Shaw Black Dog Café
of Hollidaysburg
27. Regina Patterson Black Dog Café
of Williamsburg
28. Lisa Maclay Morrisons Cove Memoral Park
of Bellville
29. Mary Richards Boro Coffee
of Hollidaysburg
30. Mark Hileman Boro Coffee
of Hollidaysburg
31. Gary Lochner Boro Coffee
of Imler
32. Harold Leahey Boro Coffee
of Hollidaysburg
33. Judy McLaughin Best Way Pizza
of Hollidaysburg

We did have TWO top ticket sellers again this year. The same two as last year but they reversed first and second

place. Tim Gildea was our top ticket salesperson, selling 350 tickets! Tom Fisher was our second place ticket salesperson, selling 200 tickets. Thank You, Thank You, Thank You!!!!

This annual fundraiser would not have been possible without you, our members and the fantastic businesses that support Rails to Trails. Please remember to support these businesses throughout the year: **SPOKES N SKIS, G-3 PHYSICAL THERAPY, MORRISONS COVE MEMORIAL PARK, HOSS'S, BLUE GILLS, MAYFIELDS, DINER 22, BELLY BUSTERS, THE DREAM RESTURANT, BEECH TREE CAFÉ, BESTWAY PIZZA, COUNTRY VIEW NOTARY, US HOTEL, FREEDOM EXCURSIONS, JIMMY JOHN'S, PRIME SIRLOIN, , BIDDLES BREWING, BLACK DOG CAFÉ and BORO COFFEE.**

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
www.rttcpa.org





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Or Current Resident.

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

October 5, 2024	5k Run, Laces for Alli, Begins in Williamsburg.
October 8, 2025	Board Meeting, 7 PM at the Grannas Station
November 11, 2025	Board Meeting, 7 PM at the Grannas Station
November 15, 2025	Huntingdon Library 5K Race start Alfarata Trailhead

Please check our Calendar of Events page on our website (www.rttcpa.org) to keep up to date, for other events that may be taking place on the trail hosted by other organizations

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 address below.

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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