



Volume 31 Issue 1

Rails to Trails of Central PA Inc.

Winter 2026

HAPPY NEW YEAR

LOOKING BACK AT 2025 / LOOKING FORWARD TO 2026

Looking at a glass half empty or choosing to see a glass half-full?

As we look back at 2025, we can choose to think of everything that went wrong/bad with the trail. We can always say we do not have enough volunteers to get things done. There are always more projects to undertake than we have time and volunteers to accomplish. The loss of core members of our organization that contributed so much to the Lower Trail over many years also impacted the trail.



Moreover, of course, came the the devastating news of the Lower Trail being cut in half due to a structurally unsafe bridge pier. Hearing all of these things can be depressing.

HOWEVER, we can also choose to see what GOOD comes from our problems:

As we look into 2026 we have so much to be grateful for. We continue to have a fantastic core group of dedicated volunteers who keep the Lower Trail running. We may not get all of the projects completed but we do keep moving forward and maintain what we have. Facing the most devastating obstacle to overcome, the bridge repair, was the most positive development for Rails to Trails of Central PA Inc,

I think it surprised everyone how quickly people jumped in to work towards finding a workable solution. Engineers, donors, contractors and volunteers came together to work toward getting the pier fixed so that the trail could once again be open. (Please read the bridge update below). It truly shows what a wonderful community we live in with caring, generous, businesses and individuals. **We are truly blessed.**

BRIDGE UPDATE:

Well, as trail, users can see, we do not have the bridge pier repaired YET. This is through no fault of the engineers, contractors, donors, Rails to Trails or permitting. Our problem with getting the repair done has to do with one thing that is totally out of our control, **MOTHER NATURE.**

It was almost “**TOO GOOD TO BE TRUE**”. I spoke of earlier in the newsletter, the devastating news of having to close the trail to through traffic. Through hard work, determination, support of engineers, contractors, donors and volunteers, it looked as though the repair was going to be done within 9 to 10 weeks of the bridge being closed. This is almost unheard of in today’s world of getting planning done securing permits, having a contractor on site with “shovel ready” and raising the funds to do the work. Everything was coming together and hopes were high that the repair would be done.



I think everyone realized the impact having the bridge closed and the risk of losing the entire bridge if this problem was not addressed immediately. Keller Engineers worked overtime and were able to prepare a scope of work, engineering drawings and secure permits. We had contractors ready to work, making room in their schedule to do the emergency repair, and stage the equipment. The first attempt at the repair was called a “dry repair”, where a cofferdam would be set up around the pier and the water pumped out, allowing the repair to be done in the dry. The river and Mother Nature did not agree with this fix. We were unable to pump the water out; it just kept refilling as fast as water was pumped out. This meant a different fix was needed. a “wet repair”. It is just what the name states, wet. Now, if everyone remembers what happened in

November, The weather turned, it became COLD and windy. Winter had set in and work was halted.

Sadly, the repair did not happen. During this first attempt, we/engineers/contractors did learn plenty. We learned a lot to insure that when the weather breaks we will be able to get in, get the work done, and get the bridge re-opened.

This is Rails to Trails highest priority. We cannot begin to express our gratitude to all who have stepped forward to work on this project; Keller Engineers, Cottle's Asphalt, Grannas Brothers, and those of you who donated funds designated for this repair. If others wish to contribute toward the repair, remember any donation made to Rails to Trails of Central PA is tax deductible. Our organization is a 501(C)3 corporation.

With all of us working together this repair will be done. Now everyone pray for a mild and early spring.

THANK YOU!

WHITE TRILLIUM

By Bob Richers



After a long winter, my wife sue and I were more than ready to go camping and ride our bikes. As luck would have it, a nice weather window opened at the end of April into May. We decided to head to Ohio Pyle State Park.

As we soon discovered there was an added bonus of visiting the park as numerous White Trillium were in bloom. The purple and occasional Yellow Trillium bloom along the Eastern (Water Street) end of the Lower Trail around mid-April. Ohio Pyle, being of higher elevation, lags with its Trillium blooms by several weeks.

There were two noticeable sizes of White Trillium growing but Sue's wild plant app listed them both as White Trillium. The larger plant was a Large Flowered Trillium, and the smaller more abundant plant was Snow Trillium.

Most Trillium flowers have three pointed leaves with three pointed flowers above and look like a 6-pointed star. Underneath, the plant has a stem with larger leaves. They are early spring flowers and put on quite a show.

The larger Trillium can be twelve to eighteen inches tall. The flower petals can be frilly along the edges and may fade to pink with ageing.

The Snow Trillium are usually just six inches tall and grow in large groups. When blooming in early spring they almost look like early winter snow dusting the forest floor.

Both early stages of these plants are edible they can be used in salads or boiled for ten minutes and served with vinegar. The leaves become bitter once the flowering begins. Most Trillium should not be harvested but the more common varieties can be sparingly used.



On our bike ride we also encountered numerous Wild Germanium and on the narrow shelves of the railway cuts Wild Columbine was blooming.



LOSS OF TWO LONG TIME FRIENDS:

December saw the passing of two men who made a large impact on Rails to Trails of Central PA Inc.

Sunday December 14th Lt. Col. Palmer Brown passed away.

Yes, that is a name that will be forever associated with the Lower Trail. Retired Lt. Col. Palmer Brown of the USMC was hired in 1992 by Rails to Trails to be the project manager in the planning/design/and construction of the Lower Trail. He was just the man we needed, strong, forceful yet diplomatic. I remember when we were interviewing the applicants for the position. We knew it we had opposition to the development of the potential trail....we did not know how much opposition. One of the questions we asked of the applicants was how they would deal with the possible opposition. Every applicant but one responded with "how could there be any opposition to such a positive project". The one applicant that answered the question with thoughts of talking with the opposition, educating the public while still standing the ground to developing the trail....that was Palmer. He got the job and everyone that enjoys the Lower Trail sees the job he did. His email address said it all "patrailboss"

Even after the trail was completed, Palmer stayed with the organization, serving on the Board of Directors for many years and serving as President for several years. To the day Palmer passed away, he knew the trail "inside and out"

Palmer leaves behind his wife, Carolyn of 67 ½ years, He was the father of three children, Palmer Jr, Tammy and was preceded in death by his youngest daughter, Tabitha. He was also a grandfather to nine grandchildren, eleven great grandchildren and two great-great grandchildren

Wednesday December 17th G. William Ward passed away.

Bill is a man many will remember riding the trail. When he could no longer ride his two-wheeled bike on the trail that did not stop him. He got a three-wheeled bike and kept it down on the trail. He loved riding and developed friendships with many trail users. He was a GREAT AMBASSADOR for the Lower Trail. Bill also had, as everyone in Central PA knew, great leadership abilities, (you do not run one of the most successful Trucking Companies without great leadership abilities). Bill served a number of years on the Board of Directors for Rails to Trails. He was a great liaison between the board and the trail users.

Bill has now joined his wife, (Carolyn), in heaven. He is survived by his 5 children and their spouses, 12 grandchildren and 7 great-grandchildren.

Both Palmer and Bill were truly pillars of Rails to Trails and the community. They have set examples we should all learn from. There have been a number of individuals I have met and worked beside throughout the years in this organization that taught me the same lesson....always give back to the community that raised you, gave you your livelihood, and expect nothing in return. If this is done, you will make it a better place for future generations. These two man did that.

These men leave a large void and will be greatly missed!

ELECTIONS



Elections were held at the January 13th monthly Board meeting. Joe Cleary, George Foster, Sarah Gonsman and Joe Lansberr were all re-elected for another 3 year term. Rich Lawler was elected for a three-year term. Rich fills the seat that

was left vacant by Steve McKnight. Steve stepped away from the board allowing him more time with his family and other obligations. He will remain active with Rails to Trails serving on several committees. Rich Lawler is a fresh face coming to our board from the Huntingdon end of the trail.

He comes ready to work and help the organization. Following the election of the Board, elections were held for the officers for the 2026 year. Elected were; President: Adam Bergstein, Vice President: Mike Panek, Secretary/Treasurer: Tim Gildea and Recording Secretary Jennifer Barefoot.



This is just a reminder that in the Spring Newsletter, raffle tickets will once again be sent out. The raffle is our major fundraiser, providing a large percentage of our annual operating budget. It is also a way for you to renew your membership. Right now, we are working on the prizes to be raffled. If you wish to donate to the raffle, please contact Jennifer Barefoot, jbsunbrook@gmail.com or Vickie Brua, at vicbrua@breezeline.com

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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CALENDAR OF EVENTS

February 10 th , 2026	Board Meeting, 7 PM at the Grannas Station
March 10 th , 2026	Board Meeting, 7 PM at the Grannas Station
April 14 th , 2026	Board Meeting, 7 PM at the Grannas Station
May 12 th , 2026	Board Meeting, 7 PM at the Grannas Station
May 13, 14,& 15, 2026	Hollidaysburg High School Community Days

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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