



2020

**PENNSYLVANIA
ANNUAL TRAILS**

REPORT



pennsylvania
DEPARTMENT OF CONSERVATION
AND NATURAL RESOURCES



WeConservePA

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ANNUAL TRAILS REPORT, MESSAGE FROM THE CHAIR

The global pandemic substantially increased trail use across the Commonwealth as residents and visitors sought the freedom of the outdoors for recreation, exploration, health and well-being. Additionally, as the pandemic spread through the nation and racial tensions mounted, the Pennsylvania Trails Advisory Committee and DCNR advanced steps to recognize the diverse voices across the state that access trails. While it has been a challenging year, our commitment to diversity, equity, and inclusion to advance trails for all users across Pennsylvania is unwavering.

Pennsylvanians are fortunate to have access to a world class trail system with more than 12,000 miles of trail. From riding your bike on the 46-mile Ghost Town Trail (recognized as Trail of the Year in 2020) in the railroading and coal mining heritage region of Cambria and Indiana counties, to backpacking the Black Forest Trail in Tiadaghton State Forest, Pennsylvania's trails offer many different types of experiences.

Each year our trail system continues to grow due in no small part to the work that DCNR does to promote and fund trail projects throughout the Commonwealth. Together, we are making great progress towards ensuring that every Pennsylvania resident has access to a trail within 10 minutes of their home.

The Pennsylvania Trail Advisory Committee is comprised of 20 members that represent different types of trail users. Collectively, we use our varied perspectives to lend guidance to DCNR on emerging trail issues and to ensure that Pennsylvania's trails continue to be inclusive spaces that meet the needs of an ever-changing society.

The 2020 Annual Trails Report describes many trail stories, recognizes the unprecedented challenges that the pandemic presented to our recreational network and highlights our "Trail of the Year." Within this report you will find pictures and descriptions of trail projects throughout the Commonwealth and links to websites where you can find more information about these trails and the organizations that maintain them. What you won't find are the countless hours of planning and hard work that go into completing every mile of trail. Behind each of the projects highlighted in this report is a government agency, non-profit organization, or volunteer group that is committed to improving the quality of life for all Pennsylvanians. Together, we seek to advance the benefits of a well-developed statewide trail system that provides access to the diversity of users across the Commonwealth.

Sincerely,



Lydia Martin, Chair
Pennsylvania Trails Advisory Committee

PTAC MEMBERS

Betsy Aiken, Chair—*Members at Large*
John Confer—*Members at Large*
Elizabeth Fager—*Water Trail Users*
Chris Firme—*Hiking*
Donna Iannone, Secretary—*Members at Large*
Tom Kase—*Cross-Country Skiing*
Carl Kelemen—*Members at Large*
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Jim Laird—*Off-Highway Motorcycling*
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Chris Patterson—*Snowmobiling*
Miica Patterson—*Members at Large*
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William Ritting III—*Persons with Disabilities*
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Ron Steffey—*Members at Large*
Gwen Wills—*Horseback Riding*

AGENCY STAFF

Jennifer Crobak, FHWA
Jamie Lemon, FHWA
Janet Flynn, PennDOT
Jacqueline Koons-Felion, PennDOT
Diane Kripas, DCNR
Alex MacDonald, DCNR
Leslie Sarvis, DCNR
Olivia Braun, DCNR
Tyler Semder, DCNR
Paula DeVore, DCNR
Michael Hoffman, DCNR

FUNDING AND TRAIL HIGHLIGHTS

ACCOMPLISHMENTS OF DCNR-FUNDED PROJECTS:

- ◆ 45 trail grant projects completed totaling \$9M in grant funds
- ◆ Completion of four projects that addressed Priority Trail Gaps throughout the Commonwealth
- ◆ Development of 30.4 miles of non-motorized trails, including six bridges, one comfort station and ten trailheads
- ◆ Rehabilitation of five miles of non-motorized trails, including seven bridges
- ◆ Planning for 37 miles of new trails
- ◆ Acquisition of two acres of land for non-motorized trails
- ◆ 12 mini-grants were awarded to snowmobile clubs for grooming and trail improvements for snowmobile trails
- ◆ Purchase of three pieces of equipment to construct and maintain 366 miles of motorized trails

PROJECTS AWARDED DCNR FUNDING:

- ◆ DCNR received 79 applications requesting \$15.9M
- ◆ Awarded 53 trail projects with \$9.4M in grant funds that will leverage \$10.7M in local match
- ◆ Nine projects will address Priority Trail Gaps
- ◆ 14 projects will plan and design for 54 miles of new non-motorized trails, including six bridges, 14 trailheads, one comfort facility, and two tunnels
- ◆ Three projects will plan and design for new motorized trails and facilities
- ◆ 22 development projects will construct 15 miles of new trails, including five bridges, four comfort facilities, and 11 trailheads
- ◆ Nine development projects will rehabilitate 13 miles of trails, including seven bridges and one trailhead
- ◆ Eight projects will develop or rehabilitate eight miles of motorized trails, including one bridge and one trailhead
- ◆ Four equipment purchases will maintain over 420 miles of motorized trails
- ◆ Four projects will assist in the acquisition of two acres of land for non-motorized trails

- ◆ Two education projects will provide ATV and Dirt Bike safety and education training to youth in the Commonwealth

ADDITIONAL TRAIL-RELATED FUNDING:

- ◆ PennDOT, Multimodal Transportation Program - \$2.25M

2020 TRAIL HIGHLIGHTS

- ◆ 2020-2024 Pennsylvania Land and Water Trail Network Strategic Plan:
 - The year-long public process of developing the 2020-2024 Pennsylvania Land and Water Trail Network Strategic Plan culminated with the release of the plan in March 2021.
 - The trail plan provides a five-year blueprint for state and local governments, including seven recommendations and 40 action steps.

Highlights from COVID Impact Assessment, Pennsylvania Environmental Council

- ◆ Trail impact assessments varied by trail type with natural surface trail managers reporting a 64 percent 'mostly positive' outlook, and long-distance managers reporting a 53 percent 'mostly positive' outlook.
- ◆ The most mentioned impacts of COVID-19 in Fall 2020 were an increased awareness and interest in trails (positive), an increase in littering and illegal dumping (negative), and loss of revenues to management organization (most challenging).¹
- ◆ 93 percent of trail managers reported that trails were used and perceived as positive outlets this year, with 87 percent reporting increased awareness and interest in their trails.¹
- ◆ 52 percent of managers identified loss of revenues as the most challenging impact on their organization.¹
- ◆ Many managers reported daily use numbers nearly matching typical weekly totals, straining trail infrastructure such as bathrooms, parking lots, and trash receptacles.¹

¹ Pennsylvania Environmental Council. The COVID-19 Pandemic's Impact on Pennsylvania's Non-motorized Trails: Fall 2020 Update. (2020) <https://pecpa.org/wp-content/uploads/FINAL-2020-Covid-Trail-Impact-Report-Feb-2.pdf>

2020-2024 PENNSYLVANIA LAND AND WATER TRAIL NETWORK STRATEGIC PLAN

In 2019, DCNR began a more than year-long public process of developing the 2020-2024 Pennsylvania Land and Water Trail Network Strategic Plan. During this process, input was received from thousands of state residents, including local trail providers, outdoor enthusiasts, and the public at large.

The final plan provides a five-year blueprint for state and local governments, trail providers, and other stakeholders to guide Pennsylvania's trail stewardship and expansion. The plan's vision is to develop a statewide land and water trail network to facilitate recreation, transportation, and healthy lifestyles for all. It includes seven recommendations and 40 action steps for meeting the trail needs of all Pennsylvanians.

Specifically, the plan prioritizes the closing of Priority Trail Gaps, the completion of Major Greenways, emphasis on regional initiatives, the needs of specialized trail-user groups, and ensuring everyone feels welcome on trails in Pennsylvania. These actions are designed to eventually have all Pennsylvanians living within 10 minutes of a trail. Implementation of the plan will be guided by the 20-member Pennsylvania Trails Advisory Committee.

States are required to maintain a state trail plan to receive federal funding through the Recreation Trails Program and this plan is a companion document to the 2020-2024 Pennsylvania Statewide Outdoor Recreation Plan. With more than 12,000 miles of trails, Pennsylvania is a national leader in providing a variety of land and water based recreational opportunities.



PENNSYLVANIA'S PRIORITY TRAIL GAPS

Since 2009, DCNR has been working with partners to identify and map trail gaps along Pennsylvania's Major Greenways and Regionally Significant Trail Systems. Identifying and prioritizing the closing of Priority Trail Gaps is believed to be the most effective method for improving the connectivity of trail systems statewide. This effort is echoed in 2020-2024 Pennsylvania Land and Water Trail Network Strategic Plan to help facilitate recreation, transportation, and healthy lifestyles for all. To support this approach, DCNR provides additional consideration to grant requests that address these gaps.

In 2018, a workgroup made up of trail organizations, PennDOT, and DCNR staff developed new Priority Trail Gap criteria that more clearly defines which projects are deemed a Priority Trail Gap. As a result, the current criteria to be considered a Priority Trail Gap includes:

- ◆ Gap is along a statewide major greenway or regionally significant trail
- ◆ Connects two existing segments of trail or connects an existing trail to a state park, state forest, or key community
- ◆ The gap is five miles or less
- ◆ The trail itself has been formalized in an official planning document

DCNR will continue to work with local trail providers to periodically update the trail gap data. This includes coordinating with trail managers to obtain data for gaps in their trail systems as well as re-assessing any existing trail gaps. For the most updated information on Priority Trail Gaps, please visit DCNR's [Pennsylvania's Priority Trail Gaps GIS Map](#).

TOP 10 TRAIL GAPS IN PENNSYLVANIA

From the Priority Trail Gaps, DCNR and the Pennsylvania Trails Advisory Committee assign the Top 10 Trail Gaps as the state's most critical gaps requiring a significant amount of time and resources to address. These 10 trail gaps represent projects that:

- ◆ Will connect contiguous open miles of trails
- ◆ Require construction or rehabilitation of major infrastructure
- ◆ Require a large amount of funding (generally over \$1 million)
- ◆ Require interagency coordination

DCNR maintains a story map of the current [Top 10 Trail Gaps](#).



Enola Lowgrade Rail-Trail Safe Harbor Trestle Bridge

Manor Township

ENOLA LOW GRADE RAIL TRAIL, SAFE HARBOR TRESTLE BRIDGE, LANCASTER COUNTY (*Priority Trail Gap #20*)

The Safe Harbor Trestle Bridge is a former railroad bridge spanning 1500 feet across the mouth of the Conestoga Creek as it empties into the Susquehanna River. Half of the trail is complete, with the other half to be completed in the next two years. The rehabilitation of this bridge would aid completion of the Enola Low Grade Rail Trail for a total of 28 miles of trail. Rehabilitation of the Safe Harbor Trestle Bridge has begun!

Go to [Manor Township's Facebook page](#) for up-to-date information on the rehabilitation project.

Status: *Under Construction, estimated completion early 2022. Project is fully funded with \$7.9 million.*



Delaware and Lehigh Trail



DELAWARE AND LEHIGH TRAIL, BRIDGE STREET GAP, BUCKS COUNTY
(Priority Trail Gap #125)

The Delaware and Lehigh Trail is one of Pennsylvania’s most complete long-distance trails, with 90 percent of its 165-miles completed. Trail users must currently turn around at Bridge Street in Morrisville, as its elevation makes the street impassable. Closing this gap would enable 30 miles of uninterrupted travel to Easton and restore full access to nine miles of trail. The [Delaware](#)

[& Lehigh National Heritage Corridor’s website](#) provides detailed information on current gaps and open sections of the trail network.

Status: *Scheduled to begin construction in early 2022. Project is fully funded with \$1.1 million*

EAST COAST GREENWAY, SPRING GARDEN STREET, PHILADELPHIA COUNTY
(Priority Trail Gap #127)

The East Coast Greenway is a multi-use 2,900-mile trail from Maine to Florida with 30 percent already constructed on traffic-free greenways. The construction at [Spring Garden Street](#) in Center City Philadelphia would connect the Schuylkill River Trail with the Delaware River Trail.

Status: *Public outreach and preliminary engineering is complete. Anticipated cost to close this gap is \$50 million.*

BUFFALO VALLEY RAIL TRAIL, LEWISBURG GAP, UNION COUNTY
(Priority Trail Gap #241)

The Buffalo Valley Rail Trail is a 9.5-mile, multi-use trail that spans between Lewisburg and Mifflinburg boroughs. The current US Highway 15 crossing into Lewisburg Borough is unsafe for trail users. Closure of this gap will create a safer connection between the

majority of trail miles and the 0.5-mile section of trail in Lewisburg Borough.

Status: *Early planning underway. Anticipated cost to close this gap is \$1 million.*



Armstrong Trail, Brady Tunnel

© Sheri Anderson

ARMSTRONG TRAIL, BRADY TUNNEL, CLARION COUNTY (Priority Trail Gap #130)

The Armstrong Trail is a 36-mile, multi-use trail that follows the alignment of the former Allegheny Valley Railroad and is a part of the planned 333-mile Erie to Pittsburgh Trail. The Brady Tunnel is currently closed due to its deteriorated state. Once rehabilitated, it will connect four miles of the Armstrong Trail to the north

with 32 miles of trail to the south to create a fully-connected 36-mile system.

Status: Design & stabilization complete, seeking construction funding. Anticipated cost to close this gap is \$6.5 million.

ENOLA LOW GRADE TRAIL, MARTIC FORGE BRIDGE, LANCASTER COUNTY (Priority Trail Gap #321)

Martic Forge Trestle Bridge is a former railroad bridge that was turned into a pedestrian walkway for the Enola Low Grade Rail Trail in 2017. In the summer of 2018, the bridge was **severely damaged by arson**. The bridge is located over Pequea

Creek between Martic and Conestoga townships, Lancaster County.

Status: Scheduled to begin construction in 2021. Project is fully funded with \$2.9 million.

LYCOMING CREEK BIKEWAY, WILLIAMSPORT RIVERWALK AND SUSQUEHANNA STATE PARK CONNECTION, LYCOMING COUNTY (Priority Trail Gap #132)

The Lycoming Creek Bikeway and Williamsport Riverwalk are two local trails located within the Susquehanna Greenway, a 500-mile greenway of parks, trails, river access points and revitalized towns along the **Susquehanna River**. Currently, US Highway 15, Interstate 180 and Lycoming Creek present

barriers to connecting these two trails and the state park. Three miles of trail and one pedestrian bridge will need to be constructed to make this connected vision a reality.

Status: Design underway. Anticipated cost to close this gap is \$3.5 million.

OIL CREEK STATE PARK TRAIL GAP, VENANGO COUNTY (Priority Trail Gap #214)

The **Oil Creek State Park** trail system includes 52 miles of hiking trails and 10 miles of multi-use trails, and is also a part of the 333-mile Erie to Pittsburgh Trail. Currently, travelers on the Oil Creek State Park multi-use trail must either end their trip or continue on-road to reach 35 additional miles of multi-use trail

at the southern end of the Park. Four miles of trail must be constructed within the State Park to create a continuous 49.5-mile trail.

Status: *Planning underway. Anticipated cost to close this gap is \$8 million.*

SCHUYLKILL RIVER TRAIL, WISSAHICKON GATEWAY GAP, PHILADELPHIA COUNTY (Priority Trail Gap #238)

The Schuylkill River Trail is a 130-mile multi-use trail that will one day link Pottsville, Schuylkill County with Center City Philadelphia, with 60 miles currently complete. The **Wissahickon Gateway Gap** presents one of the most challenging gaps. Multiple conflict points, including an active bus stop and eleven curb cuts, prevent many from continuing on the trail. The

completion of this gap will connect seven miles of trail east to Schuylkill Banks in Center City Philadelphia with 20 miles of trail west to Phoenixville, Chester County.

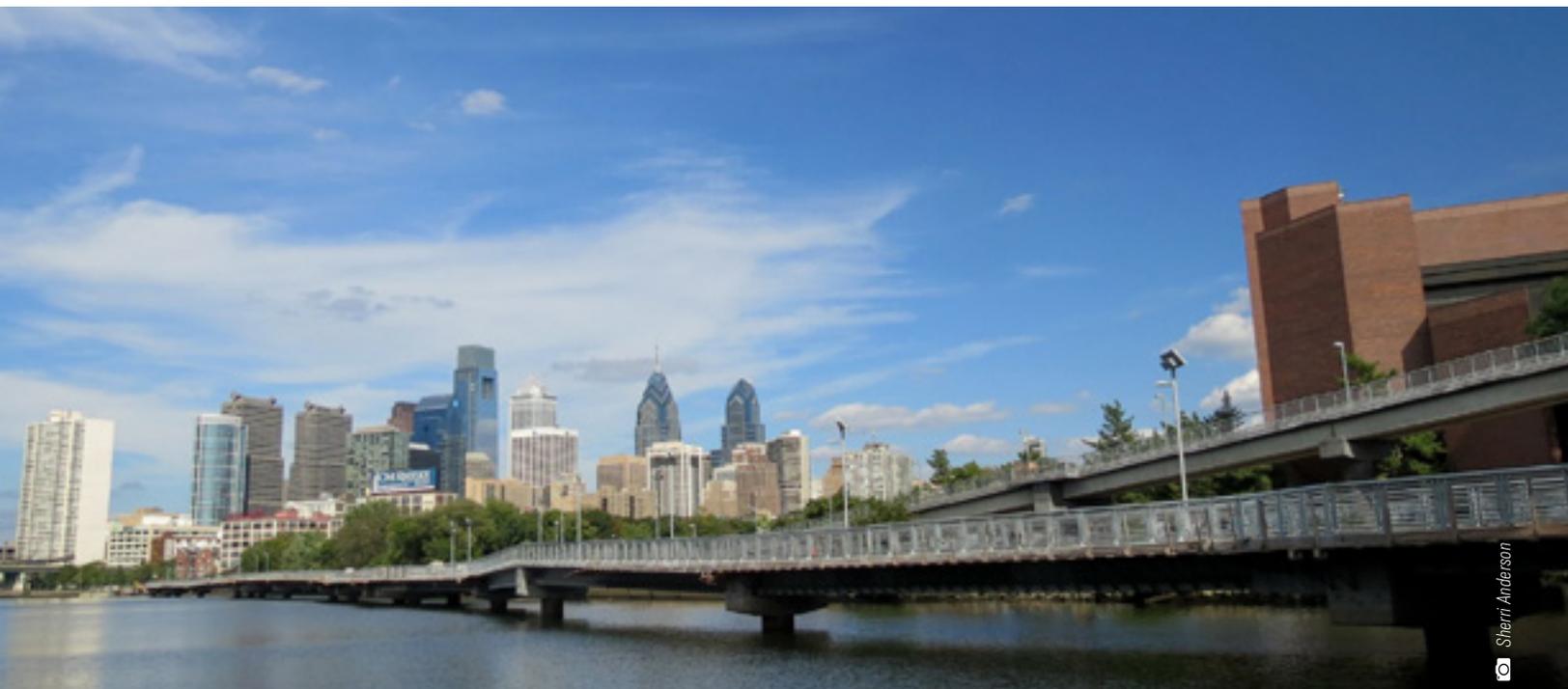
Status: *Planning complete and land acquisition underway. Anticipated cost to close this gap is \$4.5 million.*

LOWER TRAIL TO CANOE CREEK STATE PARK GAP, BLAIR COUNTY (Priority Trail Gap #273)

The Lower Trail is a 17-mile multi-use trail that is a part of the 320-mile **Pittsburgh to Harrisburg Main Line Canal Greenway**. Currently, trail users cannot travel between the Lower Trail and the multi-use trails within Canoe Creek State Park, including access to

overnight accommodations. The connection will require construction of one mile of trail, crossing over the Juniata River and US Highway 22.

Status: *Project completed in early 2021.*



Sherril Anderson

NEW AND IMPROVED GREENWAYSANDTRAILS.ORG

WeConservePA has launched an updated version of [GreenwaysandTrails.org](https://www.greenwaysandtrails.org), the online hub for Pennsylvania's greenway and trail community. The updated site includes easier navigation for visitors to access trail resources, news, educational opportunities, and information on trail organizations and groups across the state.



[Resources](#) | [Find a Group](#) | [Submit News](#) | [Newsletter](#) | [Greenways and Trails Summit](#) | [Learn & Network](#)

COVID IMPACTS ON TRAILS

PENNSYLVANIA ENVIRONMENTAL COUNCIL (PEC)—COVID IMPACT REPORT AND UPDATE

Frank Maguire, Program Director, Trails and Outdoor Recreation, Pennsylvania Environmental Council

To better understand how the increased number of people getting out on trails during COVID 19 was impacting these recreational resources, the Pennsylvania Environmental Council (PEC) studied trail counter data and surveyed trail managers from across the state to put the impacts into perspective.

Across the full season, and on the trails that had consistent numbers, there was a 17 percent increase in trail use, but some individual trails recorded over 150 percent increases when comparing single months. All this confirms a position that trail advocates and outdoor enthusiasts have known for years; public spaces and specifically trails are critical infrastructure for communities around the Commonwealth. An emphasis needs to be put on improving trail connectivity and ensuring trails are maintained for years to come. We all benefit when the trailhead is your front door.

[Spring Report](#) | [Fall Update](#)



Scott Glen Bridge, Ghost Town Trail

Earl Carney Jr.

TRAIL OF THE YEAR IN AN UNPRECEDENTED YEAR

Ed Patterson, Indiana County Parks & Trails

The Ghost Town Trail | Jointly managed by Indiana County Parks & Trails and Cambria County Conservation & Recreation Authority.

Like most rail-trails in 2020, the Ghost Town Trail experienced extremely high visitation as a result of the COVID 19 pandemic and people's desire to seek out places to safely recreate. The Ghost Town Trail had also been newly designated as Pennsylvania's 2020 Trail of the Year, adding new interest to a trail that extends well beyond the borders of Indiana County. Our trail access areas were often as busy on weekdays as they normally would be on weekends.

During the past year, we often reflected to 1991, when the idea was conceived to convert an abandoned railroad in the Blacklick Creek Valley into a recreational corridor. It was an idea that was new to this area, one that was met with a large degree of skepticism by many. Would people use a trail that traveled beside one of the country's most polluted streams and had areas scarred by leftover coal refuse piles and coal mine ruins? Would tourists spend money to visit an area that looked like maybe its better days were long past?

Yet, among the ravaged landscape were scenes of great beauty, places of significant historical interest, and communities with residents who had a captivating heritage to share. Back then, we asked people to dream of a day when a ribbon of green would link together communities, parks, historic sites, and wildlife habitat into a continuous corridor that might someday connect to other ribbons of green across the region and beyond. What we did not know then was how the trail would provide a haven for people seeking refuge from the ravages of a world-wide pandemic.

Today our long-ago dream is a reality. Extensions of the trail provide links to places well beyond the original sixteen miles of the Ghost Town Trail. But as the pandemic seems to be slowly fading and our year as Pennsylvania's Trail of the Year ends, we continue to dream, to imagine future generations that will travel here to enjoy the legacy of an idea that began many years ago.

For more information, visit: www.indianacountyparks.org/trails/ghosttown_trail.aspx



Proper Family, North Country Trail Association

North Country Trail

ADAPTING THE HIKE 100 CHALLENGE

Valerie Bader, Director of Trail Operations, North County Trail Association

The North Country Trail | Managed by the North Country Trail Association

Since 2016, thousands of North Country Trail users have signed up for and completed the annual Hike 100 Challenge, one program offered by the North Country Trail Association. Each year this free challenge renews, but the rules remain the same: Hike any 100 miles on the North Country National Scenic Trail between January 1 and December 31. Trail users can explore 100 unique miles or revisit the same mile 100 times. Log mileage over weeks or months, or during one big adventure. Walk, snowshoe, run, ski, day hike or backpack. Once 100 miles are bagged, participants submit a completion form to receive a commemorative patch and certificate of completion.

In 2020, during the coronavirus pandemic, NCTA realized the need to adapt the Hike 100 Challenge rules to accommodate travel restrictions and limitations. NCTA continued to encourage trail users to get outdoors and hike on the NCT, but to also hike on local trails; temporarily allowing non-NCT miles to count toward the Challenge and introducing the “Hike from Home” initiative. Due in part to this rule change (but also the increased interest in trail use during the pandemic), over 4,200 individuals participated in Hike 100 and over 2,500 completed it, including

286 Pennsylvanians. 2020 Hike 100 finisher Amy Eckert shared that “Like so many people, I was pretty negatively impacted by the pandemic this year. My work dried up to almost nothing, I was unable to make several conferences and other trips I had planned, and I felt anxiety related to my health and that of others. Getting outdoors was just the balm I needed, and the North Country Trail provided the perfect social distancing outlet.”

During the pandemic, the North Country Trail (and all trails) provided reprieve for newly homeschooling families, an outlet for individuals when gyms were closed, and a place for people to find adventure away from their homes. The North Country Trail saw increased use across the Trail and many Hike 100 participants have reported that participating in 2020 gave them a newfound appreciation for hiking and appreciation of nature. The 2020 Challenge winner, Jennifer Bieniek began hiking to do some low impact exercise after surgery. “I fell in love with it quickly!” explained Jennifer. “I realized that I had missed out on this wonderful way to find peace! I live within 15 minutes of the North Country Trail and am still astonished that most people from my area that I speak to about it have never heard of it. I plan to continue our adventures!”

For more information, visit:
www.northcountrytrail.org



D&L Trail

Marco Calderon

TRAIL FRIENDLY BUSINESSES EXPERIENCE BOOM AMIDST GLOBAL PANDEMIC AND RECORD TRAIL USE

Claire Sadler, Interim Executive Director, Delaware & Lehigh National Heritage Corridor, Inc.

The D&L Trail | Managed by the Delaware & Lehigh National Heritage Corridor, Inc.

In a year wrought by global pandemic and economic downturn, the D&L Trail and the outdoor recreation industry saw record numbers of trail use and spikes in sales. Across the D&L Trail, trail counters recorded an average monthly increase of 88 percent in 2020 compared to the previous year. Additionally, trail counts since June 2020 show that monthly trail use consistently exceeded even the busiest months of 2019.

Previous to a pandemic induced surge in outdoor recreation, a 2017 study revealed that the Delaware & Lehigh National Heritage Corridor (D&LNHC) had an economic impact of \$475 million, generated through direct jobs, wages, salaries, consumer spending, tax revenue, and more. To leverage this economic impact, the Delaware & Lehigh National Heritage Corridor developed the D&L Trail Friendly Business Program.

The D&LNHC's Trail Friendly Business program currently recognizes 28 businesses as "trail-friendly,"

eight of which are outfitters for outdoor recreation, including shops where trail users can buy running shoes, bicycles and other gear for hitting the trail. The D&L Trail Friendly Business program certifies businesses within the Corridor who are committed to developing a trail-friendly atmosphere. To earn their certification, businesses must meet a series of requirements that foster said atmosphere. These requirements range from offering free water bottle refills to training staff in knowledge of the D&L Trail and Corridor.

In 2020, local businesses that participated in the D&L's Trail Friendly Business program reported an inability to keep bicycles, kayaks and other outdoor recreation items stocked. All of which provide hope that outdoor recreation can not only continue to be a multimillion-dollar revenue generator for the region, but a key part of economic stimulation in the wake of COVID-19.

When the nation experienced a bike shortage, Pocono Biking was in a unique position to fill this critical need for visitors to Northeastern Pennsylvania.

"Pocono Biking has seen a significant increase in bike rentals and sales since we opened in spring [2020],"



D&L Trail

Marco Calderon

says Nikki Hurley, Director of Marketing & Sales for Pocono Biking. “Now more than ever, being outdoors is important for your physical and mental well-being and something you can enjoy with family/friends and easily social distance.”

Similarly, Yardley’s Firehouse Cycles provided bikes while their stock allowed and offered repairs for individuals to dust-off bikes that they had in storage.

“The local population has come to our aid like never before, they want small businesses to succeed and we remain grateful for that.,” Michael Joseph of Firehouse Cycles. “While we personally would like to go back to pre-Covid business as usual, we are fortunate to be able to provide some type of assistance in people getting outside still.”

Beyond outfitters, our program recognizes eateries and shops that welcome trail users. In Slatington, Diggity Dogs & More, a well-known food truck at the trailhead, commemorated their business’ ability to withstand the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on their signature t-shirts.

“More than anything, families have come together and are getting out during this time, it’s a positive thing” says Keith Schaffer, owner of Diggity Dogs & More in Slatington. “There were many days the parking lot was full and we were here to serve them.”

The D&LNHC provided respite and economic stimulation for communities in the five-county Corridor. As the region and nation faces the continued impacts of the coronavirus pandemic, the D&L Trail continues to be a safe and accessible space to recreate, year-round. Accessibility to the D&L Trail and green spaces is more important than ever. As a result, the D&LNHC continues to work to close D&L Trail gaps in critical areas like Wilkes-Barre and the Lehigh Valley to connect even more communities to the health, wellness and economic benefits afforded by access to green spaces and outdoor recreation.

For more information, visit www.delawareandlehigh.org



Great Allegheny Passage

Bryan Perry

DISPATCH FROM THE GREAT ALLEGHENY PASSAGE: 2020 AND THE CORONAVIRUS PANDEMIC

Bryan M. Perry, Executive Director, Great Allegheny Passage Conservancy

The Great Allegheny Passage | Managed by the Great Allegheny Passage Conservancy

With people seeking safe outdoor activities in 2020, visits to the 150-mile Great Allegheny Passage measured 1.4 million, up nearly 50 percent over the prior year and well above the six-year trend line. This was welcome news between Cumberland, Maryland and Pittsburgh, of course, but upon a closer look, requires a deeper analysis.

The coronavirus pandemic, especially in the first three months, placed restrictions on restaurant capacity, resulted in canceled out-of-state travel plans by those likely to spend dollars on lodging and meals, and pushed some bed-and-breakfast property owners to close their doors temporarily. Amtrak reduced the frequency of its Capitol Limited route, a favorite method for bicyclists' return trips. Shuttle services were idled, and bike shops struggled to maintain inventory. With bookings and reservations down, many small businesses laid off front-line staff. Changing safety

and quarantine protocols among states and counties along the Great Allegheny Passage, and among states and counties from which tourists might arrive, made tourism feel riskier and more challenging. According to a forthcoming analysis by Pittsburgh-based consulting firm Fourth Economy, business activity reported by trail-facing businesses along the GAP was down 70 percent between 2019 and 2020.

Still, by July and August, with stay-at-home orders and travel restrictions eased, some entrepreneurs experienced a welcome rebound. For example, Deborah Fisher, proprietor of Levi Deal Mansion in Meyersdale, Pa., noted that once long-distance travelers on the Great Allegheny Passage became more comfortable with staying overnight outside their own homes, and wearing masks, her business resumed at more normal levels through the fall.

In a normal year, the Great Allegheny Passage draws scores of group rides organized by tour companies, and hosts 5K fun runs that support volunteer trail maintenance efforts, but the coronavirus pandemic scuttled many of those scheduled events. According to Mary Kaufman of Laurelville Camp and Conference



Great Allegheny Passage

© Bryan Perry

Center, the national Road Scholar program canceled all four of its 2020 group tours on the GAP, and its first two in 2021, each with over two dozen participants. “Losing those six week-long trips with guests from all over the world was a tremendous financial blow and it affected all the local vendors we partner with, like tour companies, shuttle services, restaurants, and hotels.” Even the well-regarded GAP Relay presented by UPMC Health Plan pivoted to a virtual event last year.

So how best to account for increased visits? Popularity with local residents (especially near Pittsburgh and Cumberland), and visitors to Ohiopyle State Park, bisected by the Great Allegheny Passage, in which visitation was up 46 percent according to park manager Ken Bisbee. An uptick in tourism in the fall once travel restrictions loosened, some indoor dining returned in trail towns, and long-haul bicyclists rescheduled their canceled spring trips.

One additional challenge brought on by increased use, especially along sections of the Great Allegheny Passage near Pittsburgh and in its Steel Valley communities, was that volunteers performing routine trail maintenance were slowed by crowded trails – they typically stop work vehicles and halt chainsaw or backhoe work while bicyclists and pedestrians squeeze by – and turned two-day projects into three-day projects. With fewer volunteers willing or available

to work in close proximity to others, this combination made for a challenging year. Even over the winter and into 2021, construction and resurfacing along a well-publicized 10-mile segment closure has been slowed by runners, hikers, and bicyclists who have ignored “Trail Closed” signs, an indication of both disrespect and perhaps, desperation. From a maintenance perspective, volunteers dealt with increased litter, found hand sanitizer repeatedly stolen from bathrooms that did remain open, and the challenge of attracting new members. For their part, many travelers faced closed bathrooms, turned-off drinking water, and crowded parking lots on weekends.

At the Great Allegheny Passage Conservancy, our hope is that first-time local and regional visitors to the GAP – the “coronavirus newbies” – will return in 2021, and that they’ll explore a new section of trail or adjacent public land, stay overnight in a trail town, and pitch in with their local trail group. Businesses are already seeing the return of overnight travelers, and for good reason: with beautiful vistas, 14 major bridges, four railroad tunnels, and shaded canopies giving way to wildflowers and waterfalls, the Great Allegheny Passage is worth a return trip.

For more information, visit www.gaptrail.org

2020 REGIONAL TRAIL WORKSHOP GRANT PROGRAM

The Regional Trail Workshop Grant program provides funding to conservation-oriented non-profit organizations for the purpose of developing, marketing, and presenting trail education programs across the state, and in support of recreational trail outreach efforts. Regional Trail Workshop Grants are funded through the Department of Conservation and Natural Resources and administered by WeConservePA. A total 17 applications were received in 2020, a sharp increase over 2019. In total, 11 projects were funded with the final list of grantees announced via GreenwaysandTrails.org on February 26, 2020.

- ◆ The Erie to Pittsburgh Trail Alliance
- ◆ Lancaster Conservancy
- ◆ LandForce Pittsburgh
- ◆ Pennsylvania Environmental Council—Eastern Greenways Summit
- ◆ Pennsylvania Environmental Council—Laurel Highlands Summit
- ◆ Steffey Trail Connections
- ◆ Watersheds of South Pittsburgh
- ◆ Willistown Conservation Trust

RESPONDING TO COVID

As a result of COVID 19, three organizations ultimately refused funding, while an additional six organizations requested amendments to their original agreements to comply with restrictions.

These grants are made possible by the US Department of Transportation's Federal Highway Administration (FHWA). FHWA provides funds to states to develop and maintain recreational trails and trail-related facilities for motorized and non-motorized recreational trail uses. The Department of Conservation and Natural Resources (DCNR) has been designated as the state agency responsible for administering this federal program in Pennsylvania.

ERIE TO PITTSBURGH TRAIL ALLIANCE

Program Title: Erie to Pittsburgh Regional Trail Summit

Program Dates: August 20 – 21, 2020

Program Location: Virtual



PROGRAM DESCRIPTION:

The Erie to Pittsburgh Regional Trail Summit agenda included sessions touching on topics including railroads and trails, creative fundraising for your trails, connecting trails to towns, improving programming on your trails, and engaging county leaders. Attendees gained insight into how others program their trails, learned creative ways to raise funds allowing for continued development and maintenance of trails, and

heard firsthand from a Class 3 railroad on how to build a mutually beneficial relationship. County Executives and Commissioners shared their perspective on the importance of trails to their respective counties, and a regional planning session discussed the importance of having trail projects included county and municipal plans. Despite COVID 19 restrictions, Summit planners were able to quickly change course and provide a high-quality educational event in a virtual setting. With a goal of maintaining a high level of attendee engagement, sessions were scheduled to allow sufficient time for breaks. Over 130 people ultimately attended the summit, a higher than expected turn out likely due to the shift from in-person to virtual format. All sessions were recorded and placed on www.eriepittsburghtrail.org/2020summit for viewing and sharing.

LANCASTER CONSERVANCY

Program Title: Volunteer Land Steward Basic Training

Program Dates: September 2020

Program Location: Virtual (Google classroom)

PROGRAM DESCRIPTION:

Originally conceived as a series of five in-person volunteer training workshops, COVID 19 restrictions forced the complete restructuring of this program. A small number of volunteers were able to join conservancy staff for on-site training at several restoration locations during the late summer and fall, once restrictions had been relaxed. The other and more complex project undertaken by the conservancy was the development and subsequent launch of its online Volunteer Land Steward Basic Training program. This program utilizes Google Classroom, allowing volunteer trainees to complete the required course work at their own pace. This project was led by the Conservancy's part-time engagement coordinator. In September of 2020, the conservancy launched the program with its first cohort of 26 volunteer trainees. Upon completion of the training program, volunteer land stewards agreed to:

- 1) Adopt a preserve – identify a preserve of their choice to help maintain the trails,
- 2) Participate in at least one workday; and
- 3) Participate in at least one advanced training (as available)

LANDFORCE PITTSBURGH

Program Title: Crew Member Trail Training

Program Date(s): August 24, 27, 28, and 31

Program Location(s): Beechwood Farms (*Audubon Society of Western Pennsylvania*), and West Penn Park (*City of Pittsburgh/Tree Pittsburgh restoration area*)



PROGRAM DESCRIPTION:

LandForce hires and trains crew members seasonally to work on land stewardship-related contracts while they participate in workforce development training. Trail building and maintenance comprise about 25 percent of the contracts that LandForce services, and proper training on terminology, techniques, and individual skills is important to providing quality work. Typical crew training involves both classroom and on-site training over the course of a season. During the 2020 season, eight crew members received classroom training in a virtual setting, followed by on-site training in small, socially-distanced work groups. Some of the

work performed during on-site training involved the creation and improvement of trail structures such as box steps and rock inlays. This work was done as part of a maintenance task and as part of a trail reroute around a typically wet and steep area of trail. Crews were ultimately able to create 350 feet of new trail while performing maintenance on nearly a mile worth of trail at Beechwood Farms. In West Penn Park crews were able to construct about 1,500 feet of new trail to create access from an existing trailhead to a restoration area, while also providing a few upgrades to the existing trail for continuity. In both cases, the work performed by LandForce trainees was critical in providing ease of access, and in increasing safety and enjoyment for trail users.

PENNSYLVANIA ENVIRONMENTAL COUNCIL



Program Title: Eastern Pennsylvania Greenways and Trails Summit

Program Date(s): September 1 – September 30, 2020

Program Location(s): Virtually each Wednesday, eight *Fridays in the Field* mobile workshops

PROGRAM DESCRIPTION:

Originally planned as a two-day summit assembling the eastern Pennsylvania greenways and trails community to share best practices and strategies to improve trail planning, development, maintenance, and stewardship, the Eastern Pennsylvania Greenways and Trails Summit was transitioned to a month-long hybrid event in response to COVID 19. Over 200 individuals registered for the event, comprised of 10 virtual workshops (two offered each Wednesday) and eight *Fridays in the Field* mobile workshops. Registrants included trail professionals, municipal officials, planners, and consultants, as well as volunteers and trail enthusiasts from across eastern Pennsylvania. Virtual workshops covered many timely topics, including the health

benefits of trails, utilizing volunteers, the impacts of COVID 19 on trail usage, and diversity, equity, and inclusion on trails. *Fridays in the Field*, held rain or shine and open to a limited number of participants, highlighted several of eastern Pennsylvania's trail gems, including Philadelphia's Delaware River Trail, Carbon County's Riverview Park, the Lehigh Valley D&L Trail, and the Lackawanna River Heritage Trail. More information and links to presentations can be found at: www.pecpa.org/2020epgts

Program Title: Laurel Highlands Conservation Landscape Virtual Trail Summit

Program Date(s): September 22-23, 2020

Program Location(s): Virtual

PROGRAM DESCRIPTION:

The general theme of the LHCL Trail Summit was change—change in climate, technology, visitors, design, technology, and marketing. DCNR Secretary Cindy Adams Dunn kicked-off the Summit, noting the heightened awareness of the importance of outdoor recreation, and an increase in both new and existing users during the pandemic. Deputy Secretary Lauren Imgrund discussed on-going initiatives to engage diverse populations in the outdoors and within DCNR. Discussion sessions on new technology included E-bikes, and the guidelines for their use on trails, as well as apps and programs trail users can access to find trails, log miles, view heat maps, and more. Michael



Hermann of Purple Lizard Maps shared his intensive process to creating beautiful, water-proof trail maps. Attendees each received a Purple Lizard Map and were challenged to get out and explore a trail new to them. A virtual follow-up get together was held in November for participants to share their experiences.

Originally scheduled as an in-person event, COVID 19 necessitated holding this event virtually. In an example of silver linings, the transition made possible the engagement of two nationally recognized speakers, Chuck Flink, Greenways Inc., and Charles Thomas, Outward Bound Adventures. Drawing on decades of experience, Mr. Flink discussed the varied connections communities have with landscapes, and methods of leveraging those connections while respecting the needs and values of residents, and the landscape to ensure a sustainable future. Mr. Thomas shared from his decades of experience bringing people of color to nature and outdoor recreation. His presentation, *Keeping a JEDI Pace: Justice, Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion on our Trails* was both a primer on understanding the basic terms and concepts in JEDI work, and a guide to understanding cultural differences and tools to connect people of color to outdoor recreation.

Attendees rated day one of this event 90 out of 100, with day two rated 85 out of 100*. Sessions on diversity, equity and inclusion and greenways were rated most highly. Topics most requested for future events were: placemaking, trail head design, fundraising for maintenance, and the economic impact of trails.

*25 responses, response rate of nearly 50 percent

STEFFEY TRAIL CONNECTIONS

Program Title: Trail Training Onsite Workshop Series

Program Date(s): May 1 – September 30, 2021

Program Location(s):

- ♦ Trail Association of the McKean/Elk Divide (TAMED) section of the Knox and Kane Railroad
- ♦ East Branch Trail—County Forest South Project

PROGRAM DESCRIPTION:

Steffey Trail Connections presented a series of 10 on-the-ground training workshops in conjunction with planned volunteer workdays at several sites once COVID 19 lockdown restrictions were eased. The workshops provided trail advocates and volunteers the



opportunity to participate in different phases of trail planning, as well as on a variety of trail development and maintenance projects including:

- 1) A chance to assess trail segments before design, engineering, or improvements are undertaken,
- 2) On a trail section that had the design completed and scheduled for construction,
- 3) On a nearly completed professionally designed and constructed trail section; and
- 4) Maintaining an overgrown trail corridor with drainage issues and preparing it for a trail surfacing.

The Regional Trail Workshops provided attendees with ways to advance their trail projects while also nurturing the growth of support for trails. Workshop activities increase the visibility of trail planning, improvement, and maintenance. TAMED especially was highly successful in its efforts to utilize volunteers, local assets, private funding, and local businesses to establish a community effort in improving and maintaining their section of the Knox and Kane Trail. All participants involved reported becoming more confident in their involvement in making trails enjoyable, safe, and sustainable.

A strong emphasis was placed on trail design and construction, so discussions of maintenance was simplified to include standard scheduled tasks that make trails safer, as well as more enjoyable and sustainable. Several of the workshop projects were recorded and edited into a series of training videos:

[County Forest South Project, before first workshop \(9/14/2020\)](#)

[County Forest South Project, after 6 project days \(9/19/2020\)](#)

[County Forest South Project, building up subbase through eroded areas \(9/19/2020\)](#)

[County Forest South Project, branch trimming, clearing of invasive vegetation \(9/19/2020\)](#)

WATERSHEDS OF SOUTH PITTSBURGH



Program Title: Trail Development and Maintenance for Volunteers

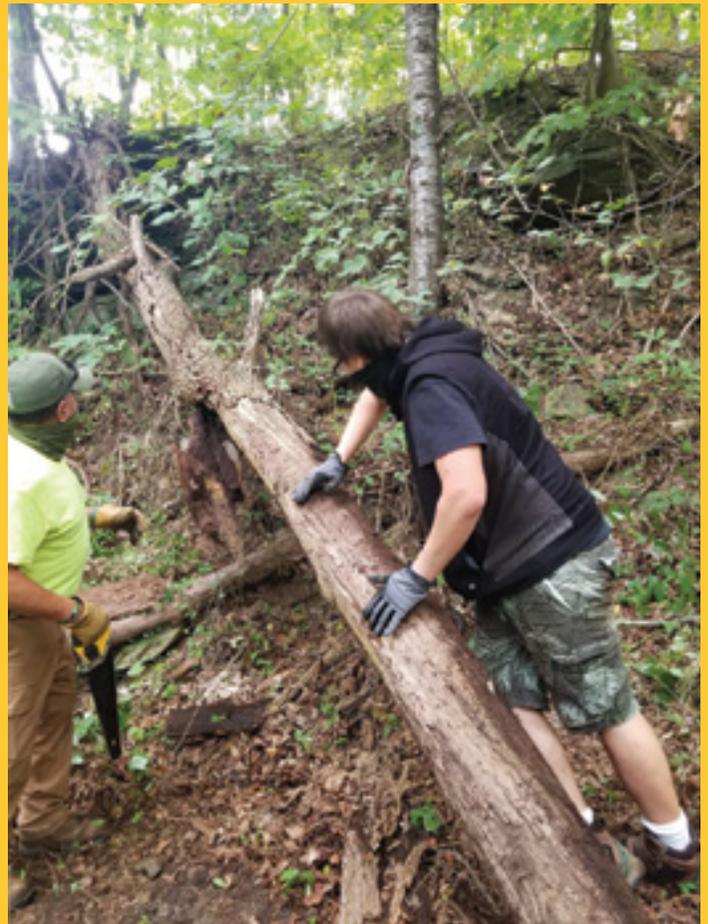
Program Date(s): August 29, 2020 and September 12, 2020

Program Location(s): Virtual, Seldom Seen Greenway in Pittsburgh

PROGRAM DESCRIPTION:

Watersheds of South Pittsburgh in partnership with the Hollow Oak Land Trust conducted a trail development and maintenance workshop designed to train volunteers on the proper techniques for sustainable, woodland trails. The workshop focused on the Seldom Seen Greenway which consists of over 90 acres in the south neighborhoods of the City of Pittsburgh. It is the only public access point to the Sawmill Run stream, currently the focus of several long-term efforts to improve water quality and habitat. Coordinated by the watershed association, these efforts include: the only integrated watershed management plan in southwestern Pennsylvania, a Green Boulevard Master Plan, and a long-term vision for trail connectivity from southern suburban communities to the GAP Trail.

The workshops were originally planned for spring of 2020. COVID 19 forced a re-examination of the timeline as well as format. To stay within state guidelines, classroom material was presented virtually



on August 29. Participants received training on the importance of greenspace and proper trail development and maintenance to improving water quality in local streams, as well as the economic value of trails and greenspace in Pennsylvania. Additional topics included greenway planning, trail assessment, design & construction, and volunteer management. An on the ground field training session followed virtual classroom content on September 12. Participants were instructed on proper use of the specialized tools, safety, and the COVID 19 guidelines for outdoor volunteer events. Participants worked in a 100-yard section of trail, and were instructed in methods of cutting-in, terracing, and contouring and leveling.

While no formal evaluation was submitted, feedback from participants was positive with most expressing an interest in additional opportunities to volunteer in the greenway.

WILLISTOWN CONSERVATION TRUST



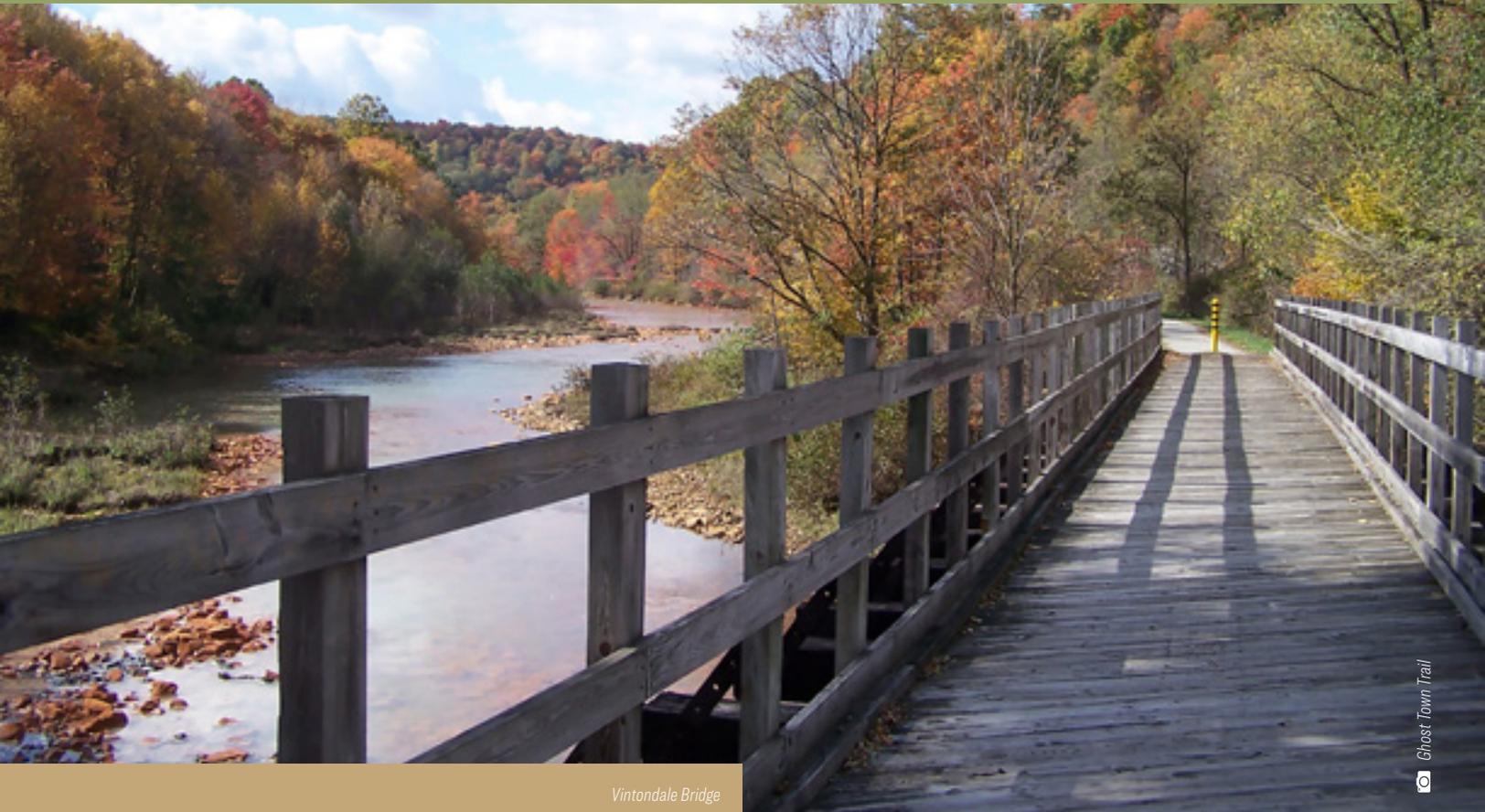
Program Title: Virtual Trail Workshop
Program Date(s): September 15 & 29, 2020
Program Location(s): Virtual

PROGRAM DESCRIPTION:

Originally planned as a full-day of on-the-ground training in the specific techniques necessary to build trails and volunteer with Willistown Conservation Trust, the program was shifted to virtual due to COVID 19. The workshop was originally planned to include additional topics of forest soils, sighting trails within floodplains and the impact on stream ecology, and native and invasive plant identification. However, with the transition to a digital format, the decision was made to narrow the focus to details of trail planning, tools, materials, construction, and maintenance, and to limit the session length to two, one-hour blocks. Emphasis was placed on demonstrating that trail construction can be accomplished with hand tools and a few materials. Participants learned that with the right tools and knowledge, a lot can be accomplished with a smaller budget.

The resulting virtual workshops occurred September 15 & 29 and utilized pre-recorded demonstrations alongside a live presentation, with a live Q&A session following. Between the virtual sessions, an in-person volunteer workday was held. Given the constraints, the two sessions were a success, and the format was effective. Attendees included organization staff, long time volunteers, local landowners, as well as members of the public interested in the work of the Trust.

GHOST TOWN TRAIL NAMED 2020 TRAIL OF THE YEAR



Vintondale Bridge

Ghost Town Trail

Each year, DCNR's Pennsylvania Trails Advisory Committee designates a Trail of the Year to help build enthusiasm and support for both large and small trails, and raise public awareness. On January 13, 2020, the Department of Conservation and Natural Resources Secretary Cindy Adams Dunn announced that the **Ghost Town Trail** was named Pennsylvania's 2020 Trail of the Year.

Cooperatively managed by the **Cambria County Conservation & Recreation Authority (CCCRA)** and **Indiana County Parks & Trails**, the trail is named for long-gone coal-mining communities once dotting the railroad corridor. Formed in 1994 as a 12-mile segment, Ghost Town Trail was the first trail in the state constructed with transportation enhancement funding. In 2005, the 32-mile main stem of the trail was completed from Blairsville, Indiana County, to Ebensburg, Cambria County.

Recently marking its 25th anniversary, the Ghost Town Trail needs only 5.5 miles to complete the first

continuous loop of rail trail in the eastern United States. It is estimated approximately 80,000 users enjoy the trail each year. The Ghost Town Trail was designated as a National Recreation Trail in June 2003 and was ranked 7th on the "Best Hiking Trails in the United States" list by American Towns Media in 2016.

CCCRA and Indiana County Parks & Trails have partnered with local businesses to assist both the Ghost Town Trail and its users. The trail draws thousands of bicyclists, hikers, runners, walkers, birders and, in winter, cross-country skiing, snowshoeing, and fat-tire biking enthusiasts.

Celebrating the Ghost Town Trail (video)



LACKAWANNA RIVER NAMED 2020 RIVER OF THE YEAR

A vibrant, cold-water “Class A” fishery in its middle and upper reaches, and a waterway that attracts more paddlers every year, the Lackawanna River in northeastern Pennsylvania was voted the state’s **2020 River of the Year**. Before joining the Susquehanna River, the Lackawanna River flows 60 miles through Susquehanna, Wayne, Lackawanna, and Luzerne counties. The waterway had been adversely impacted by the anthracite coal mining industry and railroad, industrial, and urban development over the past 200 years. With the abandonment of the anthracite mines in the 1960s and the development of modern sanitary sewage treatment works, the river has staged a strong recovery.

The waterway was nominated by The Lackawanna River Conservation Associations (LRCA), which was created by local citizens in 1987 to promote restoration and conservation of the Lackawanna River and its watershed resources. “We are very—you could say extremely—pleased to be recognized as the PA River of the Year for 2020”, said LRCA Executive Director Bernard McGurl. “This honor is a strong validation of our community’s work over the past 30 years to rediscover the incredible natural resource that is the Lackawanna River. The vision for a revitalized river that has been shared by

the Lackawanna River Conservation Association has been taken to heart by more and more of our fellow citizens every year!” LRCA promotes the river through education, public involvement, consensus building, partnerships and hands-on opportunities for all ages. Since 1987, LRCA has worked with other community groups and public agencies to plan and promote projects addressing water pollution, recreation, community development, land and water conservation, public involvement, and public policy decision-making that affects the river and its watershed.

“Emerging from a record number of public votes, the Lackawanna is most deserving of the River of the Year honor, as are the many supporting groups that rallied around it,” said Department of Conservation and Natural Resources (DCNR) Secretary Cindy Adams Dunn.

[Celebrating the Lackawanna River \(video\)](#)

LACKAWANNA RIVER
2020 Pennsylvania River of the Year

The Lackawanna River

- The river is a 62-mile-long tributary of the Susquehanna River.
- About 68.4 miles of the river are navigable by canoe/kayak during snowmelt and within three to seven days of high flow.
- Five sections of the river are designated by the Pennsylvania Fish and Boat Commission as Class A Wild Trout Waters for brown trout. That designation is remarkable for a river that was once heavily polluted.
- The name comes from a Lenape language meaning “stream that flows.”
- The most common duck species are black ducks, mallard ducks, and wood ducks. Other birds in the watershed include boblin/gullfishers, great blue herons, and green-backed herons.
- Visit [LRCA.org](#) for special and current programs and events throughout the year.

Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, New York Governor
Kathy Hochul, Secretary of Pennsylvania Department of Conservation and Natural Resources
Bureau of Recreation and Conservation, Waters Programs
The Pennsylvania Fish and Boat Commission is an agency of the Department of Conservation and Natural Resources.

TRAILS MONTH 2020

September is Trails Month in the Pennsylvania! Trails connect places, and people, while providing an important connection to nature. Trails also have a role to play in maintaining good health by encouraging physical activity and providing safe spaces for people to play and exercise, away from busy streets and commercial zones.

SOCIAL MEDIA

The Pennsylvania Department of Conservation and Natural Resources Bureaus of Recreation and Conservation and State Parks highlight and share PA trail statistics and useful trail information via social media throughout the month.

SEPTEMBER MEANS IT IS PA TRAILS MONTH! HERE ARE SOME WAYS TO CELEBRATE:

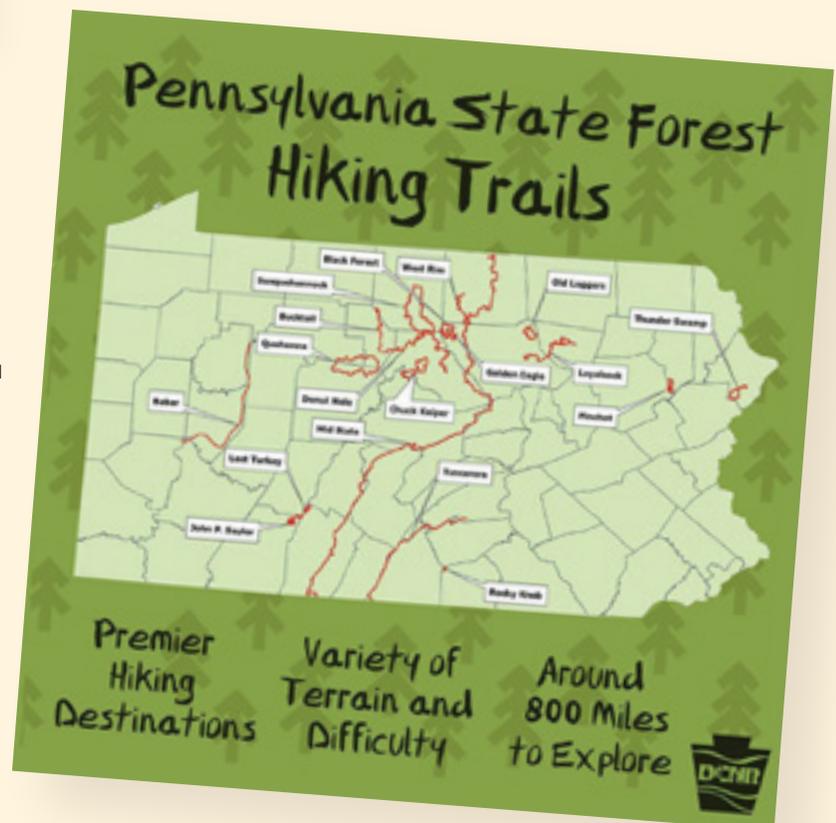
- ◆ Explore a new trail.
- ◆ Visit a favorite trail.
- ◆ Inspire someone else to visit a trail.
- ◆ Help keep trails clean by leaving no trace.
- ◆ Volunteer for trail maintenance.

Find a trail: <http://trails.dcnr.pa.gov>



DID YOU KNOW THERE ARE 18 TRAILS THAT ARE DESIGNATED AS STATE FOREST HIKING TRAILS?

Pennsylvania state forests are premier hiking destinations and offer trails that cover a variety of terrain and difficulty levels. They are great trails if you want to escape the crowds.



Northcentral Trails to Explore



Lakeside Trail, Hills Creek State Park

The 3-mile Lakeside Trail offers stunning views of Hills Creek Lake, especially during the fall season. The trail also provides opportunities for wildlife watching, including fall migrating birds and an active beaver colony.



Lowlands Trail, Sinnemahoning State Park

This scenic, 5-mile trail passes through fields, riparian zones and towering forests. An ADA-accessible wildlife viewing platform is available. The trail from the wildlife viewing platform to the 40 Maples Day Use Area is ADA accessible.



Barbour Rock Trail, Tioga State Forest

The Barbour Rock Trail provides a 1-mile round trip from the parking area along Colton Road to Barbour Rock Vista which overlooks Owassee Rapids on Pine Creek. An ADA-accessible portion of the trail provides a leisurely trip to the vista.

Pennsylvania state parks are a great place to explore trails by horseback! From the saddle, riders soak in an abundance of fresh air and gain a unique perspective of the surrounding landscape in our state parks and forests.

Here are some parks where you can find access to equestrian trails. Learn more: <https://bit.ly/3mjVNqn>



Eastern State Parks Trails to Explore



Colliers Trail, French Creek State Park

This 0.75-mile historical trail leads from the French Creek State Park campground to the Hopewell Furnace National Historic Site. Visitors can see remnants of a charcoal hearth and hut used by the colliers of French Creek (charcoalers).

The trail leads right into Hopewell Furnace, so hikers can continue learning the history of charcoal and iron making in southeastern Pennsylvania.



Whittaker Loop, Promised Land State Park

The 2.5-mile Whittaker Loop at Promised Land State Park consists of three trails that join to form a loop. Hikers will pass through a diverse forested area, by a large vernal pool, and laurel groves.

Keep an eye out for trails that are built up with rocks and the "borrow pits" where those rocks were obtained along the trail. These were made in the 1930s by the Civilian Conservation Corp.

Looking for some less traveled trails at eastern Pennsylvania state parks? Check out these two options. Find more state park trails <https://dcnr.pa.gov/StateParks> [Infographic] (state parks FB)

Mountain biking captures all the pleasures and health benefits of bicycling but adds a flare of outdoor adventure! Here are some parks where you can find access to mountain biking trails. Learn more: <https://bit.ly/3mG76JD>



Looking for some less traveled trails at western Pennsylvania state parks? Check out these three options. Find more state park trails: <https://dcnr.pa.gov/StateParks>

Western State Parks
Trails to Explore 

 **Blood Farm Interpretive Trail, Oil Creek State Park**
Spend 30 minutes walking through the 440-acre Blood Farm oil lease, which produced more oil than all of the other farms in the oil region in 1861 and 1862. Learn about 15 years of frantic drilling, gushing oil, and devastating fires on this 0.5-mile, interpretive flat trail.

 **Glacier Ridge Trail, Moraine State Park**
Designated as part of the North Country National Scenic Trail, this hiking trail, rated most difficult, extends 14 miles from the western end of Moraine to Jennings Environmental Education Center. The trail winds through forests, crosses streams, and offers scenic views of Lake Arthur.

 **John C. Oliver Loop Trail, M.K. Goddard State Park**
This 12-mile scenic loop is composed of two trail sections. The North Shore is open to hiking and biking. This section contains short, steep runs that may be difficult to climb for some bikers. The North Shore has many vistas that overlook the lake. The South Shore section is also open to hiking and biking.

Looking for some less traveled trails in southcentral Pennsylvania state parks? Check out these two options. Find more state park trails: <https://dcnr.pa.gov/StateParks>

Southcentral State Parks
Trails to Explore 

 **Buck Ridge Trail, Kings Gap EEC**
The linear Buck Ridge trail links Kings Gap to Pine Grove Furnace State Park through Michaux State Forest using a network of rocky footpaths and old logging roads. The trail begins at the mansion and follows the Scenic Vista Trail before heading into Michaux State Forest. It is 6 miles each way of most difficult hiking.

 **Cemetery Trail, Trough Creek State Park**
Starting at the Paradise Furnace ruins, this .28-mile trail crosses a small stream on a wooden bridge then begins a moderate climb to the 17th century Paradise Furnace Cemetery. This is an easy trail that leads to a historic cemetery with graves dating back to 1865 and later.



Explore Pennsylvania state parks by bike and enjoy a speedy trip and a unique perspective of the trails! For those that want a smooth ride, many parks offer biking trails, which are paved or fine aggregate surface trails, and generally flat. Learn more: <https://bit.ly/33d3BCN>

TRAILS MONTH TRAINING AND EVENTS

Pennsylvania Environmental Council—Public Lands Ride

The Pennsylvania Environmental Council (PEC) began the Public Lands Ride in 2019. Designed as a challenging-but-attainable bike ride for multiple abilities, the first event was held at Black Moshannon State Park and offered multiple routes leading riders through a variety of landscapes in Moshannon State Forest.

Due to COVID 19 restrictions, the **2020 Public Lands Ride** was transitioned to a ‘virtual ride’ model, which also offered the opportunity to expand beyond the one-day, one-route model; and gave riders the tools to explore a variety of areas on their own schedule. The event was extended to the entire month of September. Riders were provided with information on six predetermined routes within four state forests – Moshannon, Rothrock, Bald Eagle, and Forbes – which included RideWithGPS map/downloadable GPX files as well as a link to purchase the corresponding **Purple Lizard Map** of the region. Routes were limited to state

parks offering camping options to encourage safe overnight travel and weekend-long adventures.

Routes ranged from 45-65 miles in length and wound around varied landscapes, including: endless ridges and mossy streams in Bald Eagle State Forest, rolling climbs and descents on the Allegheny Plateau in Moshannon State Forest, and the chunky snowmobile trails in Forbes near Trough Creek State Park (Rothrock State Forest). In total the routes covered 335 miles of gravel and dirt roads, doubletrack trails and pavement, passing through or near 10 state parks and countless wild and natural areas. With a focus on exploration rather than completion, riders took a variety of approaches to the journey. Some riders opted for shorter versions of the rides, peppering their experience with stops for photos, short hikes, or paddleboard sessions. A few chose to incorporate one of the routes into an overnight bikepacking trip, and one participant combined two of the rides into one big 120-mile day.

As the program was designed, the mapped routes provided a framework and suggestions, but each rider was able to make it their own.

Building Trails in Wetlands & Wet Areas

On September 24 – 25, WeConservePA partnered with PennTrails, LLC to present the workshop *Building Trails in Wetlands and Wet Areas* at the Kings Gap Environmental Education Center, Cumberland County, Pennsylvania. Over these two days, participants received instruction in the unique elements of planning, design, management, and construction for trails located in wet areas. Day one focused on classroom instruction, while day two focused on building. Due to COVID-19 restrictions in place for in-person events, this workshop was limited to 10 participants and two instructors.

INSTRUCTORS:

Larry Knutson | President and owner of PennTrails, LLC, specializing in the planning, design, and construction of sustainable, natural surface hiking, equestrian and universal access trails and shared use pathways. Larry is the co-author of the recently updated *Universal Access Trails: Design, Management, Ethical and Legal Considerations*, originally published in 2014.

Sarah Walter | Professional Landscape Architect in the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania with a background in County-level planning and conservation. As project manager for PennTrails, LLC, Sarah manages projects from early conceptual planning through detail design.

Trailability: Diversity, Equity, Inclusion and Access on Recreational Trails in Pennsylvania

The panel discussion *Trailability: Diversity, Equity, Inclusion and Access on Recreational Trails* was held on September 22. This event provided an opportunity for trails and recreation professionals, GIS users, and outdoor enthusiasts to discuss DEI as related to recreational trails in Pennsylvania. Panelists shared their unique perspective on some of the social, physical, and cultural barriers to trail access that trail planners and managers need to consider when programming and communicating about their trails. Over 100 individuals (*representing 57 organizations*) registered for the event.

PANELISTS:

Tykee James | Senior Fellow, Environmental Leadership Program, board member Wyncote Audubon, and organizer of #BlackBirdersWeek.

Larry Knutson | principal, PennTrails Inc, and co-author of the recently updated *Universal Access Trails: Design, Management, Ethical and Legal Considerations*, originally published in 2014.

Taiji Nelson | Senior Programs Manager, Climate and Rural Systems Partnership with the Carnegie Museum of Natural History and North American Association for Environmental Educators 30 under 30, class of 2018.

Virginia Rose | Board member, Travis Audubon (Austin), founder of the Birdability Initiative.



TRAIL RESOURCES

GRANTS

[DCNR Community Conservation Partnership Program, Trail Grants](#)

[PennDOT Multimodal Transportation Fund](#)

[Commonwealth Financing Authority - Greenways, Trails and Recreation Program \(GTRP\)](#)

[Rails-to-Trails Conservancy, Acquisition Funding](#)

[Rails-to-Trails Conservancy, Maintenance Funding](#)

[Pennsylvania Recreation and Park Society - RecTAP Grants](#)

[Pennsylvania Environmental Council, Grants and Awards](#)

REPORTS

[Pennsylvania Statewide Outdoor Recreation Plan](#)

[Pennsylvania Land and Water Trail Network Strategic Plan](#)

[Trail Advisory Committee Annual Reports](#)

[Rails-to-Trails Conservancy, America's Rails-with-](#)

[Trails Report](#)

[DCNR, E-Library](#)

[DCNR, Research Database](#)

[Conservation and Natural Resources Advisory Council \(CNRAC\)](#)

[Pennsylvania Environmental Council, COVID-19 Impacts Report](#)

LINKS

[GreenwaysandTrails.org](#)

[PA Trails Advisory Committee](#)

[ExplorePATrails.com](#)

[GetOutdoorsPA.org](#)

[GoodforPA.com](#)

[GotoTrails.com](#)

[ConservationTools.org](#)

[AmericanTrails.org](#)

[Traillink.com/state/pa-trails/](#)

THE PENNSYLVANIA TRAILS ADVISORY COMMITTEE

The Pennsylvania Trails Advisory Committee is charged with implementing the recommendations of the 2020-2024 Pennsylvania Land and Water Trail Network Strategic Plan to develop a statewide land and water trail network to facilitate recreation, transportation, and healthy lifestyles. The 20-member DCNR-appointed committee represents both motorized and non-motorized trail users and advises the commonwealth on use of state and federal trail funding.

The committee also fulfills the federal requirement for Pennsylvania's use of federal Recreational Trails Program and is administered by DCNR's Bureau of Recreation and Conservation.

For more information about the Trails Advisory Committee, please visit their website: [PA Trails Advisory Committee](#)



pennsylvania

DEPARTMENT OF CONSERVATION
AND NATURAL RESOURCES



This report, a project of the Trails Advisory Committee and compiled by WeConservePA, is financed in part by a grant from the Pennsylvania Recreational Trails Program, Federal Highway Administration administered by the Pennsylvania Department of Conservation and Natural Resources, Bureau of Recreation and Conservation.

