



Rachel Carson Trails Conservancy

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President's Corner

By Todd Chambers, President

As spring arrives with the awakening of our winter landscape, we are filled with a sense of renewal and optimism for the coming year. At the Rachel Carson Trails Conservancy our winter efforts are blossoming into what we know will be a busy year.

We look forward to the Rachel Carson Trail Challenge and the Baker Trail UltraChallenge. These yearly events serve the purpose of bringing visibility to these trails and to the Conservancy, while also creating the opportunity to upgrade and maintain the entire Rachel Carson Trail and one third of the 141-mile Baker Trail. Other efforts this year include constructing a portion of the Harmony Trail, south from Route 910 in Pine Township towards Richard Road in McCandless Township. And if we can get approval for the environmental permitting required we plan to construct the Vestal Trail that will parallel Pine Creek and begin a trail connection between the Harmony Trail and the North Park Lake Trail.

We have been working at developing a trail network north of Pittsburgh for over a decade and progress has been painstakingly slow much to my chagrin and I'm sure others. I take a great deal of responsibility for this slow progress. The volunteer aspect of this organization usually relegates our

Rachel Carson Trail Challenge

By Steve Mentzer

A marathon is 26.2 miles, and many people can walk this distance in under seven hours. The Rachel Carson Trail Challenge is 34 miles, or about 30% longer. One would think, therefore, many people could finish it in about nine hours.

In fact, most people take considerably longer - over 12 hours. Why? Most marathons take place on relatively flat terrain, whereas the Challenge takes place over genuine Western Pennsylvania terrain. Those hills and valleys slow you down. They wear you down. Flat stretches where you can maintain a good pace are few and far between. But that's why we call it the Challenge.

The tenth Rachel Carson Trail Challenge will take place on Saturday, June 24, the Saturday nearest the summer solstice, the longest day of the year. This annual endurance hike lets

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"trail work" efforts to the time we have remaining after our "paying work" is completed. That being said, progress is being made and we are excited about the year's prospects.

As I type this long overdue article for our spring newsletter I wonder why we, the volunteers that make up this group, continue to pursue our organization's mission when our progress has been slow and taken so long.

Envisioning "what can be" is certainly part of our motivation. Providing an opportunity for people to get out and enjoy the hills and valleys and natural beauty of our region is very important. However for me and I would think others, it is more that just that.

The namesake of our organization, Rachel Carson, was

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you experience our region and test your limits in a way few people do. Advance registration is available online at www.rachelcarsontrails.org. The entry fee is \$35 until June 9, \$45 until June 21, and \$60 on-site on June 24. The fee includes drinks and snacks at four checkpoints, shuttle bus service, and a cookout at the finish. In honor of the tenth anniversary all participants will also receive a special fast-drying "technical fiber" t-shirt this year, thanks to our sponsor Elite Runners & Walkers in Robinson and Monroeville.

If you'd rather not register online, for one time only we will be accepting \$35 advance registrations via cash or check at the annual meeting in North Park on May 13 (see the Event Calendar on page 4). Registration forms will be available at the meeting for you to fill out and payment must be made there.

Baker Trail UltraChallenge

By Steve Mentzer

In the early morning hours of Saturday, August 26, 2006, dozens of hearty runners will head south from Summerville on the Baker Trail toward Plumville, 50 miles away. They'll be participating in our second annual Baker Trail UltraChallenge, a 50-mile ultramarathon.

This year we'll be covering the central section, the second of our three-part rotating series over the entire 141-mile Baker Trail. The course will follow the Baker Trail south for about 42 miles to Plumville, PA, then turn north off the trail toward Smicksburg, and end at a private farm. It starts at 6:30 AM and participants have until 8:30 PM, or 14 hours, to finish.

Unlike the Rachel Carson Trail Challenge, this is a running event. To finish within 14 hours you must maintain a pace of over 3.57 miles per hour (a 16:48 mile). Fast hikers can do this and are welcome to enter, but shouldn't expect to win.

If you're not yet prepared to run 50 miles, relay teams of up to five participants can be registered, allowing each member of the team to run a subset of the course.

This is a competitive event and trophies will be awarded for first, second, and third place finishers, for both individuals and relay teams. All individual finishers will receive a unique medal in the shape of a pie wedge.

Check the Conservancy web site for more details about this exciting event. Registration will open in late May.

And please remember that we'll need plenty of volunteers to help with planning and staging. If you're interested, please email me at ultrachallenge@rachelcarsontrails.org or call (412) 512-4544.

Baker Trail Thru-Hike

By Dewaine Beard, Baker Trail Southern Manager

At least six intrepid backpackers are poised to take on the challenge hiking the entire 141 mile length of the Baker Trail this summer. Scheduled to take place over nine days during the week of the Fourth of July holiday, this hike took shape in the heart of winter as I was editing the next version of the Baker Trail Guide.

After writing trail descriptions for every section in both directions, I felt I had to get out and see it all at once. When I bounced the idea off Trail Coordinator, Patty Brunner, it grew into an organized hike with stops at most of the established shelters and several playful stops at parks and points of interest along the way.

Currently Patty and I have enlisted family and friends of the trail to

help with logistical support. The group will begin by camping out in Cook Forest for two nights as they hike the northernmost sections of the trail. From there it will be a couple of long days through state game lands and along back roads before the pace settles down into a leisurely stroll from the North Freedom Shelter to the southern terminus in Schenley, PA.

There are still open slots for a few more hikers and we need additional volunteers to assist with logistical support (transporting food and some gear). Finally, everyone is welcome to attend the training hikes that are organized for this and the Rachel Carson Trail Challenge. If you are interested, please contact me at dewaineb@gmail.com.

Volunteer Appreciation

By Patty Brunner

Volunteers are the Rachel Carson Trails Conservancy. Without volunteers, the Conservancy would not, indeed could not, exist.

Last year was a momentous year with 110 documented volunteers contributing over 3,300 hours. That's a significant amount of time!

But what does it matter how many hours we spent on trails and related events? Our volunteer hours are all turned into the State of Pennsylvania, the Army Corps of Engineers and the National Park Service where appropriate. These numbers show that there are people who care enough to donate their time to keep our trails open. They're collected by trail groups

statewide and used as evidence of support when issues arise that are important to the hiking community.

There are always projects to help with, large and small, both on and off the trail. From digging out a clogged pipe to blazing a new section of trail, to attending meetings, helping with the newsletter or volunteering for events, everyone can find something to do. The Conservancy depends on volunteers for all of it.

We'd like to say "Thank You" to all of our volunteers, so we're having a picnic on Saturday May 13! Come and meet each other at the North Park boathouse, second floor, noon to 3 PM. And stick around for our Annual Public Meeting at 4 PM.

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instrumental in bringing to our consciousness the vital need for all of us, and our country, to make necessary changes that would lead us in a direction different than the one that we were on. With the publishing of *Silent Spring* in 1962, she exposed the hazards of pesticides such as DDT and eloquently questioned humanity's faith in technological progress, so we began to realize the impacts on and our connection with the fragile environment that supports and sustains all life.

As the years go by and our impact on the environment becomes greater than ever, we are quickly reaching a point where we again, need to go in a different direction, both individually and as a country. The connection between our actions and their impact on our lives and our environment (which we began to understand better with *Silent Spring*) is clearer now than ever before. We experience this connection every time we "fill up" our cars or pay our gas and electric bills. We want and need the goods and services that allow for the wonderful life most of us have, though the resources needed to provide these goods and services are becoming scarcer all of the time. The increase in what we pay for our energy and its impact on our lives is probably the most tangible evidence of this "supply/demand" connection.

Silent Spring set the stage for the environmental movement and changed our thinking and the direction that we as a county were going in the decade of the sixties. The continued changes that we need to make now, changes that will foster renewable energy and sustainable development patterns and changes that will recognize the limits of our resources, need not diminish our quality of life. In fact our lives and our country can be better because of the changes we need to make. By learning to live with the constraints and by taking advantage of the opportunities that our natural world provides, we will assure a better life for ourselves and our children's children.

Promoting trails and retaining greenways, which is what we do at the Rachel Carson Trails Conservancy, makes up a very small part of the continued change that needs to occur. But it is this small part, exemplified by our establishment and stewardship of trails, trail corridors and the greenways that make up these corridors, which keeps me and hopefully others pursuing our mission in spite of the seemingly slow progress. Years of effort are beginning to culminate in very tangible results.

Response to the trail events grows every year. Strong and determined people enjoy the work as well as the play. Although our efforts are only an incremental part of the continued change in thinking and direction that we need to make, these results are important enough and significant enough for our continued, spirited and enjoyable pursuit of the Conservancy's mission.

We appreciate your interest in the Rachel Carson Trails Conservancy and look forward to your continued involvement in the future.

Cleanup Projects Coming!

The Conservancy will be organizing several trash cleanup days along the Rachel Carson Trail this spring. Be sure to check the web site for the details and locations. Please come out and help us keep Western Pennsylvania beautiful!

Rachel Carson Trails Conservancy Membership Application/Renewal

We welcome your supporting interest in trails. Join RCTC leaders by volunteering for a role that suits your time and inclinations. There are many ways individuals can help! Make check payable to the Rachel Carson Trails Conservancy, P.O. Box 35 Warrendale, PA 15086-0035.

I Am A <input type="checkbox"/> New Member <input type="checkbox"/> Renewing Member <input type="checkbox"/> Former AYH			Date	Your mailing label notes last RCTC contribution
Annual Dues <input type="checkbox"/> Individual \$15 <input type="checkbox"/> Family \$25 <input type="checkbox"/> Supporting \$50 <input type="checkbox"/> Sustaining \$100 <input type="checkbox"/> Corporate \$250 <small>WHILE THEY LAST - RCTC t-shirt, with your membership of \$25 or more. Circle size: S, M, L, XL</small>				
Name				Age
Street Address				
City, State, Zip				
Telephone		Email Address		Municipality
Contact Me For				
<input type="checkbox"/> Rachel Carson Trail maintenance		<input type="checkbox"/> Harmony Trail maintenance		<input type="checkbox"/> Membership development
<input type="checkbox"/> Baker Trail maintenance		<input type="checkbox"/> Community contacts		<input type="checkbox"/> PR/Publicity

Event Calendar

Details and more events on www.rachelcarsontrails.org/events

Saturday, May 6: Baker Trail Maintenance 9AM–4PM

The Milton Loop Campground will be re-dedicated to serve as a beautiful gateway to Mahoning Creek Lake. Come join us as we work to complete work on improving the Baker Trail along the banks of the Mahoning Creek just north of the campground. Contact Dewaine at (412) 719-9904.

Sunday, May 7: Training Hike 1PM–5PM

A 6.9-mile hike to train for the Challenge and Thru-Hike. Meet at the Bobwhite Shelter in Harrison Hills Park. Contact Dewaine at (412) 719-9904.

Saturday, May 13: Volunteer Appreciation Picnic Noon–3PM

Calling all volunteers! If you participated in a trail work crew, or helped out on the Challenge or UltraChallenge, or any other activity related to our trails or would like to, then please attend our Volunteer Appreciation Picnic! There'll be food and drink and lots of discussion about trail related topics. Takes place at the North Park boathouse on Pearce Mill Road prior to our Annual Public Meeting. Contact Marian at (412) 366-3339.

Saturday, May 13: RCTC Annual Meeting 4PM–5PM

Join us as we discuss a year of progress and teamwork on the Baker, Harmony and Rachel Carson Trails in addition to details for participants and volunteers on the Rachel Carson Challenge and the Baker Trail UltraChallenge. Takes place at the North Park boathouse on Pearce Mill Road. Contact Marian at (412) 366-3339.

Sunday, May 14: Training Hike 1PM–5PM

A 7.5-mile hike to train for the Challenge and Thru-Hike. Meet at

the parking area off Ridge Road at Route 28 Exit 14. Contact Dewaine at (412) 719-9904.

Saturday, May 20: RCT Trash Cleanup 9AM–1PM

Join us as we collect and remove trash from an area along the Rachel Carson Trail. Contact Steve at (412) 512-4544 for the location and details.

Saturday/Sunday, June 3/4, June 10/11: Challenge Training Hikes 8AM–12PM

Four hikes on the Rachel Carson Trail to help prepare for the Challenge, 6–8 miles each. Contact Barb at (412) 371-2506.

Saturday, June 17: RCT Trash Cleanup 9AM–1PM

Join us on another trash cleanup project along the Rachel Carson Trail. Contact Steve at (412) 512-4544 for the location and details.

Saturday, June 24: Rachel Carson Trail Challenge

The tenth annual grueling 34-mile endurance hike on the Rachel Carson Trail. See the article on page 1.

Friday, June 30: Baker Trail Thru-Hike

A thru-hike of the Baker Trail from the northern trail head above Cook Forest to the southern terminus near Freeport, PA. The daily distance varies from 9 to 20 miles and the hikers will be expected to carry all their supplies. See the article on page 2. Contact Dewaine at (412) 719-9904.

Saturday, August 26: Baker Trail UltraChallenge

The second running of the 50-mile Baker Trail ultramarathon. See the article on page 2.

Please check mailing label for record of your contact with the RCTC.

Rachel Carson Trails Conservancy
P.O. Box 35
Warrendale, PA 15086-0035
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**Preserving and Promoting
Community Trails in
Western Pennsylvania**



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