



Rachel Carson Trails Conservancy

P.O. Box 35 Warrendale, PA 15086-0035

www.rachelcarsontrails.org info@rachelcarsontrails.org

Volunteer Opportunities

By Bob Mulshine

Many people aren't aware of the wide range of opportunities to volunteer for the Conservancy. Helping on a trail cleanup or maintenance work crew is one way, but there are plenty of other ways to contribute. Here are some:

- Update the web site events calendar, post reports and pictures from events, and so on. No special web skills needed.
- Organize and carry out a social media plan for the Conservancy.
- Increase publicity for the Conservancy events. Write and place articles in newsletters, newspapers, periodicals, TV, the web, and so on.
- Help maintain relationships with the municipalities our trails pass through.
- Represent the Conservancy to organizations which have related interests, such as scout troops, school groups, church groups, outdoor clubs and others.
- Plan and lead hikes.
- Become a steward on a section of the Baker Trail.
- Record volunteer activity information in our database.
- Help edit and/or produce our newsletter.
- Solicit your company, club or organization to sponsor the Challenge and/or the UltraChallenge.

Inside This Issue

Volunteer Opportunities	1
Spring Hikes on the Rachel Carson Trail	1
Upcoming Endurance Events on our Trails	2
Help Create a Geo-Trail	2
About Rachel Carson Trail Challenge Registration	3
Event Calendar	4

- Help maintain good relations with landowners along the trails.
- Assist in developing plans for acquiring land or easements along our trails.

If you're willing to help with any of these activities, please email the Conservancy or leave us a message at (412) 475-8881.

And remember, this list is not complete. If you have knowledge or skills which don't exactly match any of these but may benefit the Conservancy, please feel free to suggest an opportunity for you to contribute.

Spring Hikes on the Rachel Carson Trail

By Bob Mulshine

The Conservancy offers two sets of hikes to help people prepare for the Challenge. They are not restricted to people planning to do the Challenge, anyone can attend.

The first is a weekly series called the Goal Training Hikes occurring every Sunday beginning on April 17. These start with a 7.7 mile hike and finish eight weeks later with an 18.6 mile hike. They give people the opportunity to work up to longer distances and to work out the clothes, nutrition, hydration and plan of attack they're going to use on the Challenge.

The second series is called simply the Training Hikes and takes the full Challenge route and breaks it into four hikes over two consecutive weekends. These are usually very pleasant hikes because people go at their own pace and the distance is

invigorating without being exhausting. This series starts four weeks before the Challenge and is designed to help people understand the terrain of the whole Challenge in the sequence it will be encountered on Challenge day. These hikes give people confidence to successfully navigate the trail.

You can get more information about all of the hikes on the Events tab of the Conservancy web site.

Upcoming Endurance Events on our Trails

By Steve Mentzer

This year we have five different endurance events happening on our trails:

1. The fifteenth staging of the **Rachel Carson Trail Challenge**, our annual 34-mile one-day endurance hike between Harrison Hills Park and North Park in Allegheny County will be held on June 18.
2. The **Rachel Carson Trail Homestead Challenge**, occurs on that same day and is a 17-mile hike from near the Rachel Carson Homestead in Springdale.
3. The **Rachel Carson Trail Friends & Family Challenge**, also occurs on June 18. It is a 7-mile hike from near Tarentum to Harrison Hills Park. Groups of up to five people can register for one entry fee. It's a good way for parents to spend time with their kids working toward a shared goal, in addition to exposing them to outdoor activities and the natural world.

The registration fee for all three of these events includes a shuttle bus, trail guide, a cookout at the finish, and a commemorative t-shirt for everyone. Also included are up to four checkpoints along the way, providing water, Gatorade, and snacks.

4. The **Baker Trail UltraChallenge**, our 50-mile competitive ultramarathon. This year it will be held on the north section of the trail on August 27. It starts at the Baker Trail northern terminus and heads south, ending at the YMCA in Brookville. It begins at 6:30 AM and participants have until 8:30 PM, or 14 hours, to

finish. You can also participate as a relay team of up to five members, allowing each member of the team to run a subset of the course

5. The **Baker Trail Cakewalk**, starts at the same time and place as the UltraChallenge. It's a 14.8 mile non-competitive hike through beautiful Cook Forest, ending at the fire tower which overlooks the Clarion River valley.

More information on all these endurance events can be found on our web site.

Finally, don't forget: volunteers are essential to the success of our events and are needed throughout the day. If you're interested in helping at any of our events, please contact Steve Mentzer at challenge@rachelcarsontrails.org, or call (412) 512-4544 or visit the web site.

Help Create a Geo-Trail

By John Stephen

The Conservancy is working on a project to let trail users know that the Harmony Trail and the Rachel Carson Trail can be considered as one continuous trail. We are going to connect the two experiences virtually, with a Geo-Trail that will link the Harmony Trail (which currently ends at Route 910 at Wexford Run) with the Rachel Carson Trail (which currently ends at the Beaver Shelter near Babcock Boulevard).

The concept is to mark the coordinates of landmarks and intersections along the trail connection. In the ideal, the landmarks identified along the Geo-Trail will integrate elements of the region's past with its geological and natural history and its current use, into an educational challenge using Global Positioning System technology. The Geo-Trail and its coordinates will be available to all users through the Conservancy website and geocaching.com, the national clearinghouse.

Identified landmarks will tell bits of the story of the traditions,

history and development of Pittsburgh's North Hills area.

Examples of landmarks that may be highlighted include the site of the former Wexford trolley station, old farm roads, remnants of old parcels such as stone walls, streams, property boundaries from the Depreciation Lands, etc.

The connection of the two trails will include crossing Route 19 at Brooktree Road, entrance to North Park at the Bluebird Trail, pass through the woods near Latodomi Nature Center using the Crow's Trail, Braille Trail, White Tail Trail, and then Brown Road to the North Ridge Trail which continues around North Park to the Rachel Carson Trail.

If you are interested in helping to identify landmarks or design the Rachel Carson Geo-Trail please contact John Stephen at jwsdi@yahoo.com.

About Rachel Carson Trail Challenge Registration

By Steve Mentzer

For the first eleven years of the Rachel Carson Trail Challenge, the event never filled up. Initially, there was an informal cap of 200 participants, mostly based on an intuition that this number is what our landowners would tolerate. But that was exceeded way back in 2000, by just a bit, and by just a bit more every year since. Sometime around 2007, as we flirted with 600, we started hearing complaints from participants about the crowds. And the congestion. Instead of landowners, it was participants who were expressing their displeasure.

In 2008 we formally established the cap at 600, and it took until early June for the last spot to be taken. Although some who hadn't yet registered were surprised and dismayed, everyone who showed up to wait on standby for the no-show spots was able to participate. That same year we reintroduced the Homestead Challenge, which added another 200 people to the trail. Although it started later and at a different place, we heard more complaints about congestion, plus new complaints about the added people, and about unseemly behavior of others trying to negotiate their way through the crowds. We had found our true limit.

In 2009, with the 600 cap in place, we saw a repeat of 2008, except the last spot was sold sooner – at the end of May.

In 2010, it accelerated. The last spot was sold at the end of April. This shut out many people, forcing us to offer refunds to make space available. But that was a considerable administrative burden, and we determined to try something different.

In planning for 2011, we could readily foresee what would happen: we'd sell the last spot no later than the end of March

and probably even sooner than that.

The Rachel Carson Trail Challenge is a non-competitive endurance hike. It's not a race. We've never offered finish awards, and the closest we come is to list the results by finish time. This feature is a large part of its appeal, especially to people who are new to physical activity.

One of the goals of our group is to get more people involved in physical activity, and one reason we stage training hikes in the spring is to introduce the trail to people who've never been on it. Many have told us they appreciated the experience and the people they met, and decided to push themselves by setting a stretch goal of finishing the Challenge.

The problem we faced is these training hikes don't start until mid April, and even if someone decided to register after the first hike, it would be too late. Our solution is to distribute the 600 registrations over five months, giving everyone an equal opportunity to participate. Regrettably, this strategy caused demand to spike, and the accelerating pace of filling spots is repeating itself in microcosm each month. In February, the 200 available spots were sold in 90 minutes. In March, it took six minutes to sell the next 100. This is not what we wanted or expected.

We welcome constructive feedback on how we can improve, and we'd appreciate more administrative-level volunteers. Regardless, we'll review all the suggestions we receive and endeavor to introduce a better system next year. There are many issues and concerns to consider, but know that given high demand and limited supply, there's simply no way around the fact that some people who want to participate will be excluded.

Rachel Carson Trails Conservancy Membership Application/Renewal

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, a nonprofit 501(c)(3) organization.

I Am A	<input type="checkbox"/> New Member	<input type="checkbox"/> Renewing Member	Date	Your mailing label notes last RCTC contribution. Please plan your renewal!
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			
WHILE THEY LAST - RCTC t-shirt, with your membership of \$25 or more. Circle size: M, L, XL –or- Challenge ballcap at \$50 or more <input type="checkbox"/>				
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"/> Vestal Trail maintenance		<input type="checkbox"/> PR/Publicity

Event Calendar

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

Sunday, April 17: Spring Season Hike 8AM–2PM

Join us for a hike on the Rachel Carson Trail, ending at the Environmental Learning Center in Harrison Hills Park. Moderate difficulty (some hills). This hike is the same as the first Rachel Carson Trail Challenge goal training hike. Beverages and treats afterwards. **FREE and open to all!**

Saturday, April 23: Rachel Carson Trail Cleanup Day 9AM–1 PM

We'll be collecting trash along Bull Creek Road and Ridge Road near Tarentum. Contact Steve at (412) 512-4544.

Saturday, May 14: Volunteer Appreciation Picnic 1 PM–2PM

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 Cabin in North Park prior to our Annual Public Meeting. Contact Marian at (412) 366-3339. **FREE and open to all!**

Saturday, May 14: Annual Public Meeting 2PM–3PM

Come hear us 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 Cabin in North Park. Contact Marian at (412) 366-3339. **FREE and open to all!**

Saturday/Sunday, May 28/29, June 4/5: Challenge Training Hikes 8AM–12PM

Four hikes on the Rachel Carson Trail to help prepare for the

Challenge, 6–8 miles each.

Saturday, June 18: Rachel Carson Trail Challenge

The fifteenth annual grueling 34-mile endurance hike on the Rachel Carson Trail, plus the 17-mile Rachel Carson Trail Homestead Challenge and the 7-mile Rachel Carson Trail Friends & Family Challenge.

Saturday/Sunday, July 9/10: Baker Trail Maintenance Day 9AM–1 PM

Join a work crew and help get the trail in shape! Contact Dewaine at dewaine@gmail.com.

Friday, July 15: Summer Season Hike 9PM–11:30PM

Join us for the second annual 5–6 mile summer **night** hike in Harrison Hills Park, partly on the Rachel Carson Trail! We'll meet at the Environmental Learning Center and follow various trails in the light of the full moon. Bring a headlamp or flashlight. Moderate difficulty (some hills). Beverages and treats afterwards. **FREE and open to all!**

Saturday, August 27: Baker Trail UltraChallenge

The seventh running of the 50-mile Baker Trail ultramarathon along with the 14.8 mile Cakewalk hike.

Sunday, October 16: Fall Season Hike 9:30AM–Noon

On this seasonal hike we'll follow the Rachel Carson Trail from Hartwood Acres to the Harmar shelter in North Park for approximately seven miles, rain or shine. Refreshments will be served at the end of the hike. Meet at the Harmar shelter in North Park, located next to the Pie Traynor field near the swimming pool. **FREE and open to all!**

Please check mailing label date and plan your annual renewal now.



Preserving and Promoting
Community Trails in
Western Pennsylvania

Return Service Requested

Rachel Carson Trails Conservancy
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