



# Rachel Carson Trails Conservancy

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## Extending and Protecting

By Todd Chambers

The Rachel Carson Trails Conservancy is a nonprofit volunteer-based organization, and many of you dedicate countless volunteer hours toward projects associated with the work that we do. Most volunteer hours are spent dealing with blazing, repairing, and maintaining our trails or work associated with our two main events, the Rachel Carson Trail Challenge and the Baker Trail UltraChallenge.

Our Board of Directors is involved with much of the work described above as well as providing management and direction for the Conservancy as a whole. The board's work involves everything from getting out this newsletter, working with local municipalities to accommodate our trails, developing new maps and updating our trail guides to coordinating with other trail groups and writing proposals to raise funds for all of our work. Two important tasks that have taken a significant amount of time in the last year are outlined below.

**Rachel Carson Trail Extension:** Harrison Hills Park is located in the northeast corner of Allegheny County and serves as the eastern terminus to the Rachel Carson Trail. It is situated on a bluff 400 feet above the Allegheny River and the nearby town of Freeport. Across the river is the southern terminus of our Baker Trail and at the bottom of the hill, in Freeport, is the southern terminus of the Butler Freeport Trail. A fourth trail,

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currently in the planning stages, will extend the existing North Shore Trail currently ending in Millvale to Freeport and eventually to Erie, PA.

Our goal is to extend the Rachel Carson Trail, as a hiking/mountain biking trail, down the riverside bluff to create a junction that will allow access between these trails. We have been working with Andy Baechle, the director of the Allegheny County Parks Department to make this trail link possible and we received a Laurel Foundation grant for the initial design. Pashek Associates, a landscape architecture firm located on Pittsburgh's North Side was chosen for this work, which is now underway.

**Baker Trail along the Clarion River:** The Baker Trail crosses the Clarion River on the Gravel Lick Road bridge and turns on to River Lane to follow the Clarion River into Cook Forest State Park and beyond. In recent years the Conservancy has received complaints from some of the owners on River Lane about hikers

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## The Baker Trail – A Destination Hike!

By Dewaine Beard

This spring has brought an unusual amount of interest in the Baker Trail. So far three different groups of people have contacted me inquiring about how to organize long, multi-day hikes on the Baker. One team is starting from the northern terminus and working their way south through a series of long weekends. They're setting shuttles and hiking from car to car throughout the weekend. They have reached Corsica so far and their enthusiasm is contagious!

A local group had a more modest goal of hiking from the southern terminus to the end of Cherry Run. They camped out at the Crooked Creek shelter and spent some time rebuilding the fire ring there. They were impressed with our bridge

building skills -- the covered bridge over Horny Camp Run and the swinging cable bridge over Cherry Run.

Finally, a team from Ohio is making plans to through hike from north to south over the summer. They have a guide and we have been providing them with specific tips on how to make the most of their 140 mile journey through the woods, creeks and back roads of western PA.

From all of the members of the Baker Trail maintenance teams, we hope you find time this spring, summer and fall to get your boots out on the trail. We look forward to seeing you!

## Appalachian Trail Record Holder Speaking in North Park

By John Stephen

Just in time to inspire hikers for the Challenge and runners for the UltraChallenge, the Conservancy welcomes Jennifer Pharr Davis, author and Appalachian Trail record holder, to the Rose Barn in North Park on Wednesday evening June 12, 2013 at 7 pm.

Jennifer has run and hiked over 12,000 miles on long distance trails. She has trekked on six continents and currently holds endurance records on three separate trails. In 2011, Jennifer became the first female to claim the overall record on the Appalachian Trail by finishing the 2,181-mile journey in 46 days, 11 hours, and 20 minutes – an astounding average of 46.9 miles per day.

But the message she will share with us is not about records or numbers, instead it is a message that the trail is there for everyone at every phase of life and that the value of the outdoors is not found in how fast you go or how far you travel, but rather what you take from the experience.

Jennifer has authored three books, including three North Carolina guidebooks and two Appalachian Trail hiking memoirs. Her husband, Brew, has a book entitled *46 Days* that chronicles their record breaking journey down the Appalachian Trail. Jennifer has also written for, or appeared within, the magazines *Blue Ridge Outdoors*, *Backpacker*, *Trail Runner*, *Men's Journal*, *Shape*, and *Fitness*.

## Know Your RULWA

By Steve Mentzer

You've probably never heard of "RULWA". It's more formally known as the Recreational Use of Land and Water Act, 68 P.S. §477, and is an important law for trails which rely heavily on private property, including the Rachel Carson Trail and the Baker Trail.

The RULWA (and similar laws in every other state) is designed to encourage private landowners to open their land to the public for recreational purposes without charge. It does this by limiting the liability of the landowner to personal injury or property damage claims. Thus, by explicitly permitting recreation on their land, the landowner's liability does not increase, nor does their obligation to make their land safe, or to warn of dangerous conditions. In essence, despite having permission to use the land, in terms of liability, its users are treated as trespassers.

Pennsylvania enacted this statute in 1966 in response to the growing number of landowners who were closing their land to hunting, fishing, hiking, and other recreations because of concern over lawsuits. The landowners were acting rationally – why risk getting dragged into court when you can just put up a

Jennifer and her husband are planning an extended hiking and speaking tour this summer to promote her new book, *Called Again*. This is Jennifer's story, in her own words, about her record setting experience on the Appalachian Trail. It is a story of how she and her husband were able to overcome rugged mountains and raging rivers, sleet storms and 100 degree heat, shin splints and illnesses. They made new friends and tested old friendships; they shared together laughter and tears – a lot of tears. But through it all, they fell more in love with one another and with the wilderness.

Jennifer is the owner and founder of Blue Ridge Hiking Company. She and her staff of dedicated guides help make the trails in western North Carolina accessible to novice hikers and experienced backpackers. In 2008, Jennifer was named Blue Ridge Outdoors Person of the Year. In 2011, she appeared in the Sunday edition of the *New York Times*; and on national television and radio shows such as *CNN Headline News*, the CBS *Early Show*, and NPR's *Talk of the Nation*. She was also named a National Geographic Adventurer of the Year and voted *Ultrarunning* magazine's top female performer of 2011.

Her talk, sponsored by the Conservancy, is free and open to the public. The Rose Barn is located on Pearce Mill Road opposite the lake, with parking at the left behind it.

few "No Trespassing" signs? Since the overwhelming majority of land in Pennsylvania is privately owned, this trend would result in greatly diminished recreational access and opportunities for the public.

Whenever we discuss a trail with a new landowner, a question about liability is almost always raised. In most cases, fortunately, a brief explanation of the RULWA statute is sufficient to address the concern. In other cases, since no statute can prevent all lawsuits, some landowners believe that the more people using their land, the greater the possibility of being sued.

Pennsylvania continues to strengthen the RULWA in response to perceived weaknesses in landowner protection, most recently with respect to hunting.

The full text of the statute is available on our web site at [rachelcarsontrails.org/property/rulwa](http://rachelcarsontrails.org/property/rulwa) (it's only about two pages).

## The Song Sparrow's Appeal

From *Birds and Nature*, April 1901

Naturalists tell us that of all creatures below man, the largest animal brain in proportion to the size of the body is found in horses and song-birds. Whatever sense beyond instinct the little creature of whom we write may have had, something, at least, told it that it could obtain help at human hands.

A little sparrow the past season entered the kitchen of one of our country homes, and perched upon the window-sill in evident distress. Its feathers were ruffled, and its head ever and anon turned curiously around and up, as if looking at something out of the house and above the window.

In and out it continued to hop, without intermission, regardless of all offers of food, until the shutters were closed at twilight, and various were the surmises as to the cause of its strange conduct.

Through the course of the following day the same scene was enacted, without any clue appearing as to the cause of its distress.

At length, on the third morning, the mute petition for aid still continuing, one of the family, bethinking herself of the bird's curious upturning of the head, caught a new idea from it. Perhaps she might have a nest in the ivy that encircled the window, and something might be amiss with its little household.

Going to the second story and looking down, the cause of the trouble was at once manifest. A thick limb of the ivy had become loosened by the wind, and fallen directly across the petitioner's nest. It was too heavy for the bird to remove, and offered an insuperable difficulty in the way of her getting in to

feed her young — now almost lifeless.

The branch was quickly removed, when the mother-bird, pausing only for a brief inspection of her brood, was on the wing in search of food. Her mate soon joined her, and both were busy as quick wings, worked by hearty good will, could make them.

Once only did the mother pause in her work — as if desirous to give expression to her gratitude, she reappeared upon the window-seat, and poured forth a sweet and touching song, as of thankfulness to her benefactors.

She returned three successive seasons, to be noticed and fed at the same spot where her acquaintance and familiarity with man first commenced.

— George Bancroft Griffith

## Rachel Carson Trails Conservancy Membership Application/Renewal

Join RCTC leaders by volunteering for a role that suits your time and inclinations. Make check payable to the Rachel Carson Trails Conservancy, P.O. Box 472 Wexford, PA 15090-0472, a 501(c)(3) nonprofit. NEW! Renew online at [store.rachelcarsontrails.org](http://store.rachelcarsontrails.org).

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
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	

# Extending and Protecting

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being disruptive and damaging their property. We have also received complaints from hikers being harassed by owners claiming they are prohibited from using the trail along the lane.

As many of you know, the 132-mile Baker Trail is located on both public and private property. One of our tasks is to work with property owners to accommodate the trail, which in most areas is in the same location it was when the trail was created more than

60 years ago.

We are prepared to resolve every credible issue the owners have raised. We believe this is a unique and beautiful section of the trail, and we're committed to protecting it so it remains open and accessible.

Happy hiking to all!

## Event Calendar

*Details and many more events on [www.rachelcarsontrails.org/events](http://www.rachelcarsontrails.org/events)*

### Every Sunday, April 21–June 9: Rachel Carson Trail Training Hikes 8AM–

Eight hikes on the Rachel Carson Trail to help prepare for the Challenge, 8–21 miles each.

### Saturday, May 11: 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 on Ingomar Road in North Park prior to our Annual Public Meeting. Contact Marian at (412) 366–3339. **FREE and open to all!**

### Saturday, May 11: 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 information on the upcoming Rachel Carson Trail Challenge and the Baker Trail UltraChallenge. Takes place right after the Picnic above. Contact Marian at (412) 366–3339. **FREE and open to all!**

### Wednesday, June 12: Talk: Trails Are For Everyone 7PM–8PM

Hear hiker and trail runner Jennifer Pharr Davis discuss her amazing adventures on some of the world's most famous footpaths. See the article on page 2. **FREE and open to all!**

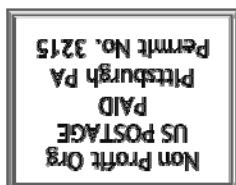
### Saturday, June 22: Rachel Carson Trail Challenge

The seventeenth 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, August 24: Baker Trail UltraChallenge

The ninth running of the 50-mile Baker Trail ultramarathon & relay from near Godfrey to Smicksburg.

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



Rachel Carson Trails Conservancy  
P.O. Box 472  
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Return Service Requested  
Preserving and Promoting  
Community Trails in  
Western Pennsylvania

