



Rachel Carson Trails Conservancy

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President's Corner

By Todd Chambers, President

Almost two years ago, Harmony Trails joined with people from the former Pittsburgh Council of the American Youth Hostels (AYH), which had been building and doing work for decades on the Baker and Rachel Carson trails. They brought leadership and vitality with them, and increasing numbers of trail users. We all share the same goals, to preserve trails and corridors for public recreation in the midst of our developing region.

Together we find increased cooperation from municipalities and agencies, both public and private. In the North Hills both the Town of McCandless and Pine Township are actively helping. Allegheny County Parks and Works Departments deserve a big vote of thanks for their bike trail work.

Marshall Township continues to expand its management of a community trail network. In Indiana Township repairs were made to the Emmerling Park bridge, damaged by the floods of Ivan, and in time for the Rachel Carson Trail Challengers to cross the creek and stay dry in June.

With the inauguration of the Baker Trail UltraChallenge this

Trail Happenings

By Steve Mentzer

Why do we organize trail events? Well, besides raising funds to support and maintain the trails, our events raise awareness of the benefits of community trails. They also encourage more people to take an interest in physical activities, and get more people to experience the beauty of our region and the natural world. Plus, they help people see our region as active and vibrant! All these things are, not by coincidence, the goals of the Conservancy. This year we doubled the number of events we stage on our trails, from one to two!

We had a great turnout for the ninth annual Rachel Carson Trail Challenge on June 18. Over 500 hikers, walkers, and runners set out from North Park, headed for Harrison Hills Park, some 34 miles away. The weather was beautiful: sunny with high temperatures in the mid 70s, striking a near perfect balance for Challengers and volunteers. When it was over, 67% crossed the finish and enjoyed a wonderful cookout with friends, family, and fellow Challengers.

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past summer competitors from even farther afield are aware of trails, and maintenance. There are now more athletes involved in support of trails than visionaries. Many are working examples of both, with talents and energy to match.

The folks with this kind of stamina are found at all age levels, and some don't mind working in any season. To join with them just check the web site (www.rachelcarsontrails.org) to learn when a work party may convene that will fit your desire to be outdoors and be productive too.

Others may consider becoming a part of the background team
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Our newest event is the Baker Trail UltraChallenge, held this year on August 27. This is a competitive 50-mile running race held on a different section of the 141-mile Baker Trail over a three-year period. For our inaugural run we had 31 ultra runners and 3 relay teams set out from the northern trailhead, racing to the YMCA in downtown Brookville. Weather conditions were ideal for running: overcast with highs in the mid 60s, surprisingly cool for late August. A total of 27 runners finished, along with all three relay teams, and everyone enjoyed pizza, chicken, and pie in the Brookville YMCA gym where we awarded the trophies to the weary, yet satisfied, finishers.

Check out the web site for a full report on each event, as well as photos and letters from participants. And mark your calendars for next year. The Challenge will take place on June 24, and the UltraChallenge on August 26. If you don't feel up to participating, please consider volunteering! Either way, we hope to see you out there!

Trails and Volunteers Keep Each Other in Shape

By Marian Crossman

We are all getting older. That's why so many try to stay in shape. But there are a lot of people lucky enough to have strength and energy who also like to be outdoors. And lucky for the trail users, they like to *work* while they enjoy the routes. Virtually all public trails have a component of energetic people whose natural instinct is to nip a bramble, move a branch, or man-handle a log that obstructs the way. And to pick up, if litter is seen.

Jerry Hoffman estimates this year's volunteers on the Rachel Carson Trail have tallied more than 100 hours of general maintenance work. It was in fine shape for those undertaking the Challenge event June 18. Trail work equals a lot of bend-and-stretch, weights, or pumping iron. Some of the participants were in top form because of so much work.

Even more hours went into preparing for the Baker Trail Ultramarathon. This year's race was a big success in bringing attention to the 55-year-old trail. For the event 40 miles of the trail were checked and improved. There were parts where lack of recent maintenance had made it difficult to follow. The ultramarathon will be run on about a third of the 141-mile trail each year making it possible to get the route in good condition.

Baker Trail coordinator Patty Brunner has high praise for the additional people who stepped forward to help on maintenance this year. Newly named Section Managers Wayne Kocher (north) and Dewaine Beard (south).

There will always be normal weather damage, but considerable extra came with storms of 2004. Boy Scout teams improved 25 miles of the Baker Trail the weekend of April 30. These young men, with their leaders and dads did a tremendous amount of work. Organizer of the large work party was Tim Hare of Wexford. He is no stranger to big jobs, having served as the regional coordinator of such multi-troop projects from the Pittsburgh area for many years. New volunteers are always needed to keep up with the challenge along with the loyal ones who treat the trail as a valuable part of their life experience.

At the Vestal Trail, along Pine Creek, neighbor Jim Northrop keeps it in good shape all season long with loppers, mower, wheelbarrow and shovel. Kids and families can get to the ballfield without going out on the road.

The Brooktree Hillside trail in Wexford is mowed and trimmed by Joe and Claudia Reljac, who live nearby, along with other volunteers.

Anyone can join in with the scheduled work parties. Some of the teams continue odd jobs during good weather intervals far into the season. See the website for contacts and times.

Young or old, we see people matching their energies with the tasks and finding satisfaction in it. The RCTC thanks everyone who lends a hand.

Friends of the Trails

By Patty Brunner

Friends of the Trails come in many different forms. There are financial supporters, volunteers of time and energy, officials that want to help, politicians that look out for the trails, but most important are the landowners. Even these landowners support the trails in different ways – some we never see but we nod “thanks” as we go by; some will welcome us when they see us coming; some remain reserved. Amos and Sara Duck have always supported, encouraged and thoroughly enjoyed the hikers that have passed by the door of their farmhouse on the Baker Trail along the eponymous Duck Lane, in Jefferson County, just north of Summerville, which they purchased in 1955. Their name was gladly listed in the Baker Trail Guide as friends willing to share water and a friendly smile. They have a log of all the hikers that have stopped to say hello and perhaps stayed the night camping in their yard. The log includes people from Kentucky, New York, Maryland, and Ohio as well as

people and Scout troops from Sharon, New Bethlehem, Clarion and Pittsburgh. Several Troops signed in more than once, such as Troop 99 out of Sharon, and Troop 19 and Troop 64 from Brookville. Mrs. Duck lights up when she talks about several hikers that she still remains in contact with such as Jack & Mary from Lackawanna, New York who have signed the log almost every year since 1976.

Mrs. Duck is proud that they are mentioned in the Trail Guide offering water and bathroom facilities. The family has also offered a place for a possible future shelter and always a place to pitch a tent. They were and are truly “Friends of the Trails”. We thank them from the bottom of hearts! Be sure to stop by, say hello, and sign the log!

McKinney Woods Bike Trail Opens

By John Stephen

On September 21, 2005 Allegheny County and the Rachel Carson Trails Conservancy held a ribbon cutting event to formally open the McKinney Woods Bike Trail in North Park. This trail, part of the Harmony Trails network, begins below Brooker Drive, off Route 19 at the north end of Wexford Plaza shopping center. It extends 2,700 feet up to the Soccer Field parking area off McKinney Road where the ceremony took place.

Allegheny County Public Works personnel who completed the trail attended and received Rachael Carson Trails Challenge t-shirts as a small token of gratitude for their hard work. The workers cleared the corridor, installed ditches and pipe culverts and laid a smooth surface of reclaimed asphalt pavement material. As soon as the contractor delivered the reclaimed asphalt from the Middle Road resurfacing project, the County's workers placed the trail surface. No outside funding was needed!!

The trail runs up a slight grade and curves through a peaceful, lightly wooded area. The Bluebird Trail and other walking trails continue into the park across McKinney Road and down the hill to Latodami Nature Center on Brown Road, two miles from Wexford.

"North Park is a tremendous asset and showpiece for Allegheny County," said Allegheny County Chief Executive Dan Onorato. "As an extension of North Park, the Harmony Trail will allow individuals who work, shop or live along Route 19 even greater access to the Park. Many thanks to the Rachel Carson Trails Conservancy and the Allegheny County Public Works Department for their vision and hard work in completing the project."

The Rachel Carson Trails Conservancy first suggested building the trail as a connection between North Park and its Harmony Trail being developed in the Wexford Run Valley. Trail users may use

Brooker Drive, cross Route 19 at the traffic signal, and then coast down Brooktree Drive toward Wexford Run. The connection drops down into woodland at the northwest corner of Brooktree.

"The Department of Public Works was great to work with on this project. It could not have happened without their expertise and experience," said Conservancy President Todd Chambers. The Conservancy has acquired the land necessary to complete a trail along the former Harmony Trolley Line corridor below Brooktree Center leading north to Route 910.

Many elected officials took the opportunity to visit the trail. State Representative Mike Turzai, County Councilwoman Jan Rea, Town Managers Toby Cordek (McCandless) and Gary Kohler (Pine) were joined by many of their Councilpeople at the event. Afterwards, members of Conservancy enjoyed the first official hike and bike ride on the trail to enjoy the first day of fall. The trail can be easily enjoyed throughout the year so come and enjoy it many times throughout the winter. And contemplate how you can help the Rachel Carson Trails Conservancy make this trail extend throughout the North Hills!



Cutting the Ribbon on the McKinney Woods Bike Trail

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
<i>WHILE THEY LAST - RCTC t-shirt, with your membership of \$25 or more. Circle size: S, M, L, XL</i>						
Name						Age
Street Address						
City, State, Zip						
Telephone			Email Address			Municipality
Contact Me For						
<input type="checkbox"/> Rachel Carson Trail maintenance		<input type="checkbox"/> Baker Trail maintenance		<input type="checkbox"/> Harmony Trail maintenance		<input type="checkbox"/> Office-type work

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that will plan and assist in the work of the board. When you renew be sure to let us know of your ongoing interest in helping.

All of our work on behalf of the Conservancy is part of a broader effort to help make our communities more livable and sustainable. The natural disasters of the past few months, which have led to drastically increased energy costs, are an indication of how our limited resources impact our lives and our world. These events make evermore clear the need to preserve as much of the natural environment as possible and to promote development that is

healthy and sustainable. We at the Rachel Carson Trails Conservancy feel that our mission to "Preserve and Promote Community Trails in Western Pennsylvania" is a small and important step in helping our area meet the challenges that the future will bring.

We thank everyone who gave support and participation in 2005 and look forward to your continued involvement.

Did You Get Lost in the Shuffle?

By Marian Crossman

Many are missing the old familiar names of the AYH in Pittsburgh, and Harmony Trails in the North Hills. But please know those originators are still at work as the inclusive Rachel Carson Trails Conservancy (RCTC)!

Last year RCTC joined up with the Keystone Trails Association, and recently with the North Country Scenic Trail, a section of which follows the Baker Trail. So the RCTC network is growing.

Please let us know that you want to be part of this expanding chain. Just check your mailing label below to see if your support is recognized. We can easily count up the Trail Guide

buyers, the community builders, leaders, and volunteer workers who give us our recognized membership base, but there are many who receive this letter whose current interest level is in limbo. We do not want to lose track of any person whose heart is still with this work. Send a renewal contribution now to have your support recorded for 2005!

And remember, members are welcome at our monthly board meetings. Check the web site calendar for dates and times.

Congratulations to Ron, who on bended knee, proposed to Jessica on the Baker Trail along the Clarion River, Gravel Lick area November 5, 2005. Teary eyed, Jessica accepted!

Event Calendar

Thursday, December 29: Baker Trail Hike 10AM–12PM

A winter stroll on the Baker Trail in the Crooked Creek area, 5–8 miles. Contact Patty at (412) 609–8422 or pabrunner2@cs.com to verify time and location and to sign up. FREE and open to all!

Saturday, February 4: Harmony Trail Winter Outing 1PM–3PM

Celebrate Groundhog Day with us! Ski, snowshoe, or hike and admire the pristine valley where the trolley used to run, now a retreat for the wildlife. Hot tea, cocoa, and treats afterwards. Call Dave & Marian Crossman at (412) 366–3339 or dmc@pitt.edu for details and to sign up. FREE and open to all!

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

Rachel Carson Trails Conservancy
P.O. Box 35
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**Preserving and Promoting
Community Trails in
Western Pennsylvania**



Welcome AYH members!

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