

2013 Members' Update

We are in our sixth year and making great progress. Here are just a few recent examples...

Were You Counted?

Who uses the trail system throughout the region? How many come from out of town? Do they stay awhile and patronize the businesses in the towns along the way? That is what the 2013 Trail User Survey will tell us.



Electronic Counter

In 2006, a similar study determined:

- ◆ Approximately 160,792 annual users frequented the trail system within the Oil Heritage Region
- ◆ Estimated overall economic impact of roughly \$4.31 million/year.

The 2013 study will update those numbers which are expected to have increased because there are now more miles of trails and the trails are connecting with more of the downtowns along the system.

- ◆ **RTC estimates over 200,000 trail users in 2013 based on the electronic counter raw numbers**

The Rails-to-Trails Conservancy (RTC) conducted a survey of people who use the recreational trails located between Titusville and Parker through the Oil Region. Electronic counters were placed along the system to count the number of users each day. RTC will use a formula, based on survey experience, to ensure that they aren't counting the same riders going out and back. Boxes containing a paper questionnaire were installed at major trailheads along the route.

The questionnaire is intended to determine trail user demographics and attitudes about the trails, how much money trail users spend because of the trail and their possible impact on local businesses. The surveys provide valuable information for each trail manager, and are very useful tools for community planning.

The final report will be available in late December or early January.

The RTC has received a \$15,000 grant from the Pennsylvania DCNR. Local assistance is added from the Allegheny Valley Trails Association and the Council on Greenways & Trails.



RTC estimates over 200,000 trail users per year!

The survey will also allow us to compare this 62 miles of trail system with others across PA:

- 34-mile Armstrong Trail (2010)
 - ◆ 80,638 Annual user visits
 - ◆ Total economic impact of \$897,442
- 36-mile Ghost Town Trail (2009)
 - Cambria & Indiana Counties
 - ◆ 75,557 Annual user visits
 - ◆ Total economic impact of \$1.7 million

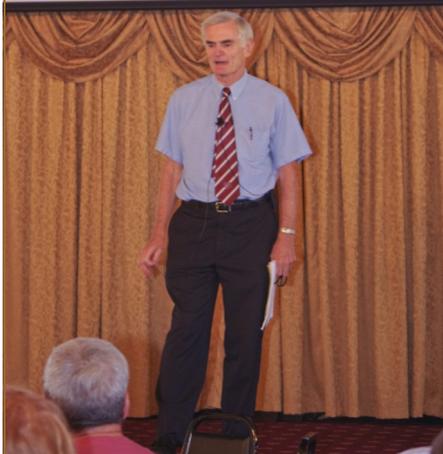
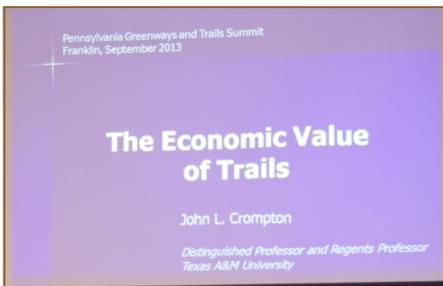
PENNSYLVANIA GREENWAYS & TRAILS SUMMIT: MAKING CONNECTIONS

The state-wide conference was hosted September 15-17 in Franklin. The three-day event brought almost 200 park and recreation professionals, business owners and consultants, trail builders and state agency representatives to northwestern PA for the first time.

- ◆ Eight mobile workshops showcased our trails, waterways, conservation easements and Trail Towns.
- ◆ Over 30 educational sessions and outdoor demonstrations taught new skills.
- ◆ Two national speakers, an eastern US regional speaker and two state level speakers captivated the audience.

But the most important part may have been the networking and examples we set. Some participants said that with the broad scope of the summit—which touched on everything from planning to funding to ways to market and promote outdoor recreation—they “learned that conservation is just one small piece of the larger outdoor recreation picture. They’re (now) armed with the knowledge that resources equal power, in that they fuel both the economy and healthy living.”

“We knew these things help make you healthier and happier and build the economy, but this summit has helped confirm that and helped build confidence it can be done,” Mary Ellen Cramer said.



Dr. John Crompton of Texas A&M University was a keynote speaker at the 2013 Greenways & Trails Summit held in Franklin. He has researched extensively the economic benefits of trails and greenways.



Some came prepared for the mobile workshops.



Re-use of brownfields, old industrial sites to include outdoor recreation.



Maple sugaring demo as hobby or business.



Display/Vendor room

Other speakers included:

- ◆ Keynote Speaker: **Robert M. Searns**, AICP Principal, The Greenway Team, Inc.
 - ◇ A discussion of how trails and greenways hold tremendous potential to reach out, inspire, and transform landscapes and communities, but especially people.
- ◆ **Lauren Imgrund**, Director, Bureau of Recreation and Conservation, PA DCNR
- ◆ **William G. Petit**, P.E., District Executive, Engineering District 1-0, PennDOT
- ◆ **Tom Sexton**, Northeast Regional Director, Rails-to-Trails Conservancy

Trails



The new **Erie to Pittsburgh Trail** logo has been placed on the Queen City Trail, the Allegheny River Trail and the McClintock Trail, showcasing the local trails as part of the regional system.

The **East Branch Trail** Extension Feasibility Study determined four options to connect Corry and Spartansburg. Landowners along the preferred route are talking with the Clear Lake Authority about right-of-way agreements.

The new trailhead in **Foxburg** will enhance the Allegheny River Trail. New lighting, landscaping, signage and an informational kiosk will invite trail users into town and showcase the trail. The first step was to move the caboose Visitors Information Center to make room for more parking and improve sight lines between trail and town.



Blue skies and comfortable temperatures set the scene as over 100 people gathered for the **McClintock Trail** Ribbon Cutting and Inaugural Ride on September 17, 2013. Numerous

Speakers applauded the partnerships that formed to see this project through to fruition. At least 40 bicyclists pedaled the trail that day while invited guests took a ride up the railroad on the train to inspect the rail-with-trail.

The new southern segment is 1.7 miles long. Just completed in September, it has a smooth asphalt surface constructed on the dike along Oil Creek and then crosses the creek using the second side of the railroad bridge. It then follows the active rail line to Waitz Road and the northern half of the trail.

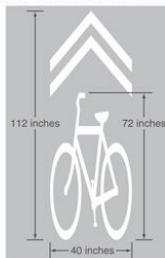
Trail Towns

All those trail users that are being counted are being invited into the small towns along the way. The East Branch Trail will connect **Corry** and **Spartansburg**. The trail study began the assessment of business opportunities.

Titusville completed a Trail Town Master Plan in 2013. 20 initial projects will enhance their marketing to trail users, grow businesses, and connect the trail to the business district.

Oil City and PennDot have determined where to place the “sharrows” along the trail route through the northside business district. These road markings remind riders and drivers to share the road.

Figure 9C-9. Shared Lane Marking



Clarion Borough and four other communities in the county have joined together to begin the planning process to benefit from the bike trails, the North Country Trail and the rivers.



Dave Thompson (age 92) of Kennerdell, joined the bicyclists on the McClintock Trail inaugural ride.

Trails

The City of **Franklin** made the connection between trail



and town a lot more smooth and inviting. The path through Riverfront



Park was widened and repaved this summer. New signs direct trail users toward the business district.

The **Allegheny Valley Trails Association** is also placing the Erie to Pittsburgh Trail logo along the trail on concrete replicas of the old railroad mile markers. These will look nice next to the newly repaved sections of trail from Oil City to Belmar.

Emlenton Borough has begun the planning of marking the trail through town.

The North Country Trail through **Clarion County** is almost entirely complete, and the NCT trail managers with the National Park Service are reviewing the route for official certification. The Clarion NCT group, part of the **Clarion Co. Trails Association**, has marked the trail sharing the Sandy Creek and Allegheny River Trails crossing into Venango County.



The **Allegheny Valley Conservancy** and an Eagle Scout have placed a new Adirondack shelter on AVTA property near Emlenton that can be used by trail users and river floaters.

Greenways Awards

The Council on Greenways and Trails recognizes those in the region that are realizing the value of our natural and outdoor recreational resources and partnering to protect and/or develop those resources for the benefit of our citizens and visitors. This year, the public was invited to nominate any individual, group, business, organization or other entity for recognition of outstanding participation and assistance in Clarion, Crawford and Venango Counties.

Franklin officials were presented with the **Greenways Neighbor of the Year Award**. The city was nominated because the city has realized the importance of the extensive and growing network of recreational trails within the Oil Heritage Region. It is known for its bicycle friendliness, and the Samuel Justus and Allegheny River trails, through cooperative partnerships with the Allegheny Valley Trails Association, now connect to downtown.

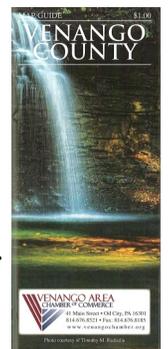
Oil City was awarded the first-ever **Greenways Partner of the Year Award**. The city was nominated because the City has been especially active in and supportive of multiple greenways and trails endeavors within the City, including some directly conducted by city personnel and other projects administered by other entities that enhanced the safety, convenience and appearance of greenways and trails throughout the community.

Each community received a certificate and a tree to be planted on or near a greenways project.

Guides and Websites

The Summit isn't the only showcase of our trails, waterways and parks. The new Venango County map now features the various trail systems and waterways.

The 2014 Oil Region Visitors Guide will feature a trail theme and a two-page spread. And the new Tourist Promotion website is www.grabtrails.com.



Our Greenways Facebook page now has 215 friends.