



Steel Valley Trail Council eNewsletter

Providing a summary of the news on the Steel Valley Section of the Great Allegheny Passage

From the President

Hello Everyone,

Our 2nd Annual Steel Valley Bicycle Tour did well despite cold weather and even snow in the morning. Our supporters are Steel Valley tough. This was the first official trial of the new directional signs on the Clairton Connector bicycle route. SVTC Board Member and past President Jim Taggart won grants from the state and the Rails-to-Trails Conservancy to design and purchase the signs.

We moved our maintenance storage container to a more central location to facilitate access for volunteers. We even had a portable toilet delivered for the comfort of trail users and volunteers. It has been very well received.

Our section of the trail continues to grow in popularity. You can forget about doing maintenance on our narrow trail during a nice weekend. There is a steady stream of bicyclists in both directions with an amazing number of touring cyclists among them. The Homestead Pump House trail access lot is full on weekends. With all this success, I believe it is time for Allegheny County to take a new look at the transportation mix in the Waterfront area. Experienced bicyclists prefer the road over the congestion on the trail. Motorists are learning to expect bicycles at intersections and bicyclists are learning that they have a responsibility to obey the rules of the trail and the vehicle code. A bike rental business has even been started with the full support of the Waterfront management.

This is extremely cool. People are coming to the Steel Valley for recreation! How many steelworkers working in the big mills would have ever imagined that?

Happy Trails,
George Schmidt

Meet Up

We are trying a new way to provide opportunities for SVTC members to get together to enjoy the trail and to volunteer to help maintain the trail. The Meet Up web site, <http://www.meetup.com/Steel-Valley-Trail-Council/>, is a way to learn about SVTC events and join in the fun.

Sponsors Needed! See your company or organization's logo here.

Interested in having your company or organization become a sponsor of the Steel Valley Trail Council and help us with our mission of long-term stewardship of our area's trails? Then please email us info@steelvalleytrail.org to find out more.



In Memory of Ron Vahosky

By George Schmidt

It is with deep sorrow that we announce the passing of Ron Vahosky. Ron died in a boating accident on April 23, 2015. He was well known in the Pittsburgh area for his volunteer efforts with environmental organizations to clean up the river banks. A few days before his death, Ron attended a SVTC Director's meeting and expressed an interest in becoming more involved with maintenance on the trail. Upon hearing of his death, the SVTC Directors were moved to purchase a bench from the Mon/Yough Trail Council to be installed at the south end of the Whitaker Bridge near Ron's home. It is a peaceful location in the shade with an open view across the river.



Since his death, members of Ron's family have volunteered to help maintain our section of the GAP trail every month. They have given a big boost to our regular maintenance volunteers who have been overwhelmed by the amount of growth on the trail this year. The SVTC Board of Directors sincerely thanks the Vahosky family for their efforts in memory of Ron and we hope that Ron's bench provides some degree of solace for his family in the coming years.

Waterfront Bike Rental Now Open

By George Schmidt

Waterfront Bike Rentals is now open at 201 Waterfront Drive, West Homestead, 15120. Marty Lischner is the owner and he does his best to satisfy his customers. This is pretty evident from the reviews on his Facebook page. Marty has the full support of the Waterfront management. They are letting him operate from the parking lot of the closed Pittsburgh Burger Co. restaurant at the north end of the bike/ped bridge over Waterfront Drive. The SVTC wishes Marty the best of luck.



Picture by George Schmidt

For bike rental information: Phone 352-280-6308 or email mwl7777@aol.com.

Infrastructure isn't Sexy

By George Schmidt

That's what the politicians say. Everybody wants to be in the picture at the ribbon cutting, but providing for the maintenance of something is a hard sell. It is my impression that this is true with our section of the Great Allegheny Passage. It was the last and the toughest section to finish. Now that it has been in operation for a few years, we are discovering some things.

1. The trail is much more popular with regional bicyclists than anyone imagined.
2. Conflicts between cars and bicyclists in the Waterfront area as result of the right-of-way not being completely along the river.
3. Maintaining the right-of-way is a big job. Keeping the vegetation trimmed back from the trail is a huge job for volunteers with hand power tools. The drains under the trail are beginning to load up with debris and require cleaning.
4. The unpaved section of the trail at the Waterfront needs to be improved.

The two miles between the Port Perry Bridge and the Whitaker Bridge continue to present our biggest trail maintenance challenge. Rain runoff from the Kennywood area causes erosion issues and we are beginning to get plugged water drains. There are 19 of them in this relatively short area. Four are plain sewer grates in the pavement and 14 of them are behind wooden fences. One is an open hole into a drain pipe coming down the hill from above. It recently plugged and covered a low section of the trail in slippery silt.

Our volunteers do the best they can with the equipment we have, but we could use the expertise of someone with experience dealing with larger maintenance issues. **If you know of a person or a company that would be willing to help us please contact me at 412-521-1538 or gschmidt1@verizon.net.**

New GAP Mile Markers

By George Schmidt

The Allegheny Trail Alliance is revising the Mile Posts along the trail. Perhaps you have noticed orange sticks with MP# *** on them separate from the plastic mile posts. The sticks reflect a more exact survey of the GAP measured from Cumberland, MD. There is about 0.6 of a mile difference in the mile markers. New stone mile markers are scheduled to replace the orange sticks this fall.

With this in mind we are using the new mile posts to locate objects on the trail with more precision. For example, our plugged drain is at MP# 137.32. Our maintenance storage box is at MP# 136.68. The Kennywood roller coasters are at MP# 137.11. We will be labeling features on the trail so that maintenance volunteers and trail users will be able to describe their location accurately. This is especially important for EMS responders.

The Kindness of Strangers

By George Schmidt



Pictures by Bob MacGregor

A downed tree was reported to the SVTC phone line on June 1, 2015. Bob MacGregor picked up equipment at our storage container and headed for the site between Kennywood and the Whitaker Bridge. Bob started to attack the tree when two passing cyclists, Tony and Jim, out of a group of apparently retired folk from eastern PA and New York, took over the bow and chain saw. They moved the limbs and grape vines to the berms. The trail was open two hours after the call. SVTC volunteers finished the cleanup. Thanks to Bob and everyone who helped with the rapid response.

SVTC'S First Comfort Station Arrives



On May 20 a portable toilet was delivered to the Kennywood area. Yale Cohen made the arrangements and Bob MacGregor supervised the delivery.

Picture by George Schmidt

New Steel Valley Trail Council Global Headquarters!



Picture by Bob MacGregor

SVTC's Maintenance Storage Container Moved

By George Schmidt



Thanks to the efforts of Bob MacGregor, we received permission from Kennywood Park to spot our maintenance storage container on Kennywood's property near the old Union Railroad maintenance sheds. The move took place on April 17. This is huge for our trail maintenance volunteers! Instead of driving the lawn tractor from the old location under the Riverton Bridge to the Waterfront and back in one day, they can cut half the trail at a time. We are talking the difference between sitting on a riding mower for 6 to 8 hours to cut the whole trail at once, or taking 3 to 4 hours to cut half of it at one sitting.

Now the storage box is very visible right next to the trail, it is obvious that it needs to be painted. Does anyone have ideas for a color scheme or decorations?

***There is another article about our new headquarters on page 10.
(And yes, there is a lot of information in this issue!)***

2nd Annual Steel Valley Bicycle Tour A Success!

By George Schmidt

The day dawned with a snow squall, but 41 hearty souls turned out to ride on our section of the Great Allegheny Passage and the Clairton Connector. About \$1300 was raised to support the Steel Valley Trail Council's mission. The riders also took time to remember Ron Vahosky. Ron was a well-known volunteer for the SVTC and other environmental organizations who tragically passed away a few days before the event.

We would like to recognize the following corporate sponsors: KU Resources, Aerotek Designs, Dicks Sporting Goods, Eat 'n' Park, and Big Bang Bicycles. Thanks also to Mitchell's Fish Market for allowing us to use their Waterfront location as our starting and end point.

We also thank the Montour Trail Council for permitting us to use the Clairton trail head for a rest stop. Thanks also to the City of McKeesport for permitting us to use Kennedy Park for a rest stop. More thanks to Clairton and Glassport for their support of the Clairton Connector bicycle route.

Of course, nothing happens without our volunteers. They are as follows:

Thanks to Terry Chavara for acquiring the Mitchell's facilities, checking people back in and running the door prize drawing.

Thanks to Maggie Schmidt for organizing the registration and door prize paperwork and working the registration table.

Thanks also to Chad Green for doing an outstanding job on short notice at the registration table.

Thanks to Bob and Maggie Holder for putting in a long day at the McKeesport rest stop without a car to warm up in.

Thanks to Paul and JoAnn Coleman for working the rest stop in beautiful suburban Clairton next to the coke ovens and the sewage treatment plant.

Thanks to Yale Cohen for leading the ride and his work to publicize the event.

Thanks to Mike Sabo for getting excellent rates for the bulk printing of our brochures.

Finally, we would like to thank Post-Gazette reporter Larry Walsh. Larry did the ride and wrote a very nice article about the event and the importance of the Clairton Connector to our regional trails.

<http://www.post-gazette.com/sports/outdoors/2015/05/09/Biking-Clairton-Connector-gets-high-marks-from-first-time-riders/stories/201505090060>

Thanks to everyone who participated in The Steel Valley Bicycle Tour. See you next year!

A Letter of Appreciation

The following hand written letter was sent to the SVTC after the Steel Valley Bicycle Tour by Kurt Smallhoover.

"What a great job you guys have done on "your" trail! I've waited for the Keystone/Sandcastle connection and am very happy with what we have now. For the turn out you had Saturday, myself included, with snow up to 8 am, just shows how much the trail and the connector are appreciated. Here is my "late" fee plus and I want to thank all the volunteers who sat out in the cold Saturday!"

Thank you, Kurt. Letters like this mean a lot to us.

Waterfront Improvements

By George Schmidt



M&J Wilkow, the new management at the Waterfront Shopping Center in Homestead, PA, is making major improvements. Aside from paving worn out asphalt they are making aesthetic changes such as revamping the fountain in Waterfront Town Center and improving street signs. With regard to the GAP trail, they trimmed back vegetation from the fence along the trail, repaired the sprinkler system where it was eroding the trail, and repaired the water fountain at the Amity Circle trail head.

The apartments at the Waterfront are managed by Morgan Communities. This year the downspouts from the buildings were rerouted into underground pipes to avoid dumping rain runoff on the trail. They are also requiring contractors who run construction equipment on the trail to repair any damage. They realize the trail is an important asset to their residents as well as being an important asset to the region.

Hydro Green Energy



From Company's Press Release:

"JULY 14, 2015 – Hydro Green Energy, LLC (HGE), a renewable energy company with patented hydropower technology, today announced that it has received a 50 year major License from the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC) for its 5.25 MW low environmental impact hydroelectric project at the Braddock Locks and Dam near Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania."

Part of Hydro Green Energy's community investment will be a bike repair station at the Braddock Dam overlook on our section of the GAP trail. In addition to buying and installing the bike repair station they will provide an annual grant to maintain the repair station and contribute to the maintenance of the trail.

Biking the Avenues

West Homestead and Homestead are working with the SVTC to improve bicycling safety through West Waterfront Drive. Many experienced bicyclists are using the road to quickly get to the trail at Marcegaglia or access the Avenues businesses via Amity Street. More "Share the Road" signs will be installed and sharrows marked on the road to increase motorists' awareness of bicyclists. The SVTC Directors voted to buy a sharrow stencil to be used by Steel Valley municipalities to mark roads connecting to the GAP. These will include the Clairton Connector bike route from McKeesport through Glassport to Clairton and the Avenues of Homestead and West Homestead.

THE SVTC NEEDS YOU!

Currently, we have a couple of people trying to do way too much in the SVTC administration. There are a few key positions that require one person exclusively to do that task. At this time, these are not Directors positions, but these people would be encouraged to attend the SVTC Board of Director's meetings and provide input even if they cannot vote on issues. Should any of these jobs appeal to you contact George Schmidt at gschmidt1@verizon.net or 412-521-1538.

Membership Chairman: We have less than 100 members, but we still need to update our membership list constantly throughout the year. This involves working with the

Treasurer to account for membership dues, sending out acknowledgements to new and renewing members, and mailing membership renewal reminders. Basic computer skills are helpful but not required.

Newsletter Editor: We need to do a better job of connecting directly to our membership. The Newsletter Editor will produce a quarterly publication to be emailed to the membership and posted on our web site. This does require some design and computer skills.

Sign Governor: This person will make sure that any signs we propose to use on the GAP comply with the Allegheny Trail Alliance Graphic Identity & Sign Guidelines Manual. This applies to any advertising and signage along the trail. Immediately, we need more directional signs through the Homestead Waterfront. That is still a very confusing area for trail users. Computer design skills are helpful, but generally the sign makers can refine any rough designs to print on their equipment.

Clairton Connector / USBR 50 Liaison: We need a volunteer that will help coordinate with the local municipalities and PennDOT on our on-road route between the Great Allegheny Passage and Montour Trail. There are already a few minor tasks involving road signage that we need assistance with if you want to help out on a trial basis. Contact Jim Taggart at info@steelvalleytrail.org for more information on these tasks.

Nominations for the SVTC Board of Directors are Open

Are you or anyone you know would be interested in serving on the SVTC Board of Directors? A number of director's terms are expiring this year. According to our by-laws a director may only serve two consecutive 3 year terms. We would like a representative cross section of people from communities in the Steel Valley. In particular, we need people with financial, legal, government, marketing, and development experience. A few more techies would be wonderful to manage social media.

A slate of candidates must be sent to the membership by October 31st with the notice for our Annual Meeting on November 16th. It will be here before you know it so don't put it off. If you would like to know more about serving on the SVTC Board contact Pres. George Schmidt at gschmidt1@verizon.net or 412-521-1538.

November Annual Meeting and Director's Elections

November 16, 2015

Location TBD.

SAVE THE DATE!!

Steel Valley Bicycle Tour

Saturday, April 30, 2016

The date for our third Steel Valley Bicycle Tour (SVBT) is Saturday, April 30, 2016. At this point, our bike tour is our primary fundraiser to keep our section of the Great Allegheny Passage open. Next year we would like to take the event to another level with more support from sponsors and the communities along our trail and the Clairton Connector bike route. It takes a serious committee to organize an event like this. Right now we need people who know how to shake the money tree and get sponsor support. Closer to the event we need people to coordinate the

event with sponsors and communities. Ideally, we would like to start the ride at the Waterfront and have it be a rolling party through the Steel Valley communities to Clairton and have it end with a bigger party at the Homestead Avenues. We need you to help make it happen. If you like to plan parties contact George Schmidt at gschmidt1@verizon.net or 412-521-1538.

Thank you KU Resources!

By George Schmidt

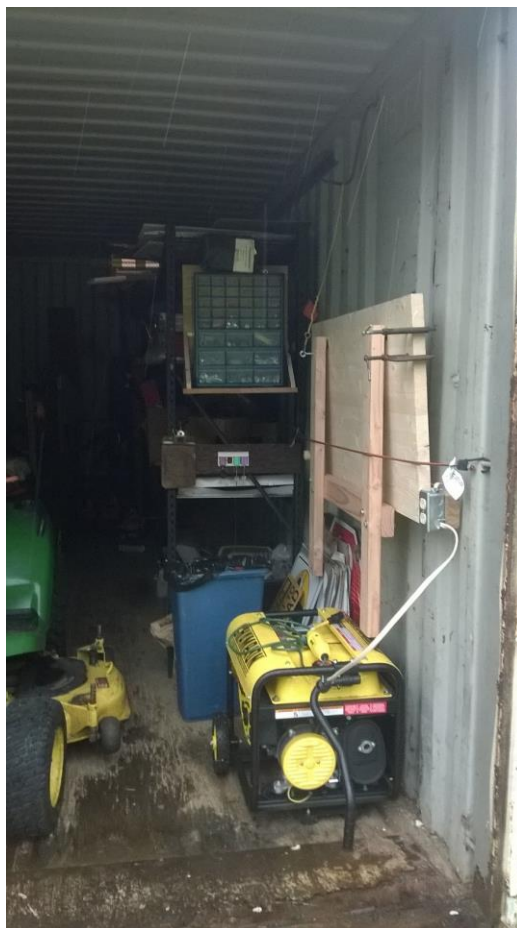
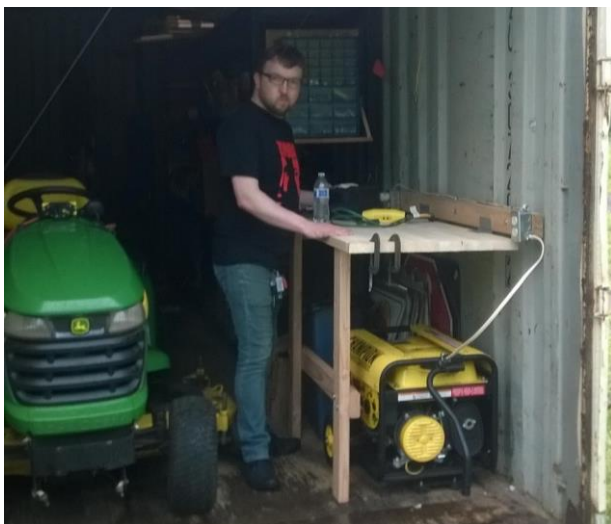
Thanks to the employees of KU Resources who volunteered to help maintain our section of the Great Allegheny Passage on August 20, 2015.

While the weather was beautiful when the work party started it developed into a heavy downpour of rain that would not quit despite the perseverance of the KU Resources people. The fact that everyone took the drenching in good humor is a testament to the quality of the employees at KU Resources.

The heavy rain we had earlier in the year caused an explosion of growth along our section of the Great Allegheny Passage that overwhelmed our regular maintenance volunteers. We truly appreciate any help we can get to keep the trail open and safe.

New Workspace within SVTC Maintenance Storage Container is a Real Asset

Bob MacGregor and his son have installed a fold away work bench inside the storage unit to use whenever we have to sharpen mower blades or perform other tasks. It includes two vises but would benefit from an electric sharpening wheel that could be powered by the portable generator. If you have an extra bench grinder and want to donate it so we can mount on the work bench, please contact us at info@steelvalleytrail.org.



Pictures by Bob MacGregor

The Fifth Anniversary **of the**



The Mon-Yough Area Chamber of Commerce **"Tour de Mon"**

Event Date: 09/26/15

Event Time: 8:00 AM - 11:00 AM Eastern

Location: The Historic Pump House
880 E. Waterfront Drive
Munhall in Pittsburgh's Waterfront

The Mon Yough Area Chamber of Commerce will be sponsoring its annual Tour de Mon 2015 on the Great Allegheny Passage. Join us for fresh air and fun on this scenic trail.

Registration: 8 am to 11 am.

Fees: \$20, \$25 after September 12th

Families: \$50, \$60 after September 12th

Ages 18 and under: \$10, \$15 after September 12th

Children under 10 must be accompanied by an Adult

Featured rides:

30 mile ride to Boston and back.

20 mile ride to McKeesport and back.

10 mile ride to Duquesne and back.

10 mile ride to the Hot Metal Bridge and back.

All Participants receive a commemorative medal, a long sleeve T-shirt*, and other prizes.

**Please note that T-Shirt not guaranteed for those registered after September 11th.*

To Register:

http://co.rca-pa.com/members/evr/reg_event.php?evid=25086117&orgcode=RCAP

Preferred payment by credit card. Advance payment required.

Contact Person:

Maury Burgwin

director@monyoughchamber.com

412-678-2450

2015 SVTC BOARD OF DIRECTORS FOR 2015

President: George Schmidt (First Term, 2013-2015)
1st Vice President: Vacant
2nd Vice President: Bob Holder (Second Term, 2013-2015)
Secretary: Paul Heckbert (Second Term, 2014-2016)
Treasurer: Earl Novendstern (Second Term, 2013-2015)

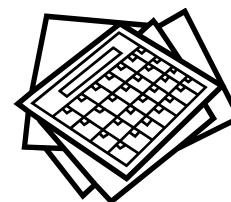


Lois Liberman (Second Term, 2013-2015)
 Bob MacGregor (Second Term, 2013-2015)
 Jim Taggart (Second Term, 2014-2016)
 Mike Sabo (First Term, 2014-2016)
 Sara Petyk (Second Term, 2015-2017)
 Yale Cohen (Second Term, 2015-2017)
 Terry Chavara (First Term, 2015-2017)
 Paul Coleman (First Term, 2015-2017)



SVTC Directors Meetings

Our monthly board meetings are the third Monday of every month.
 The location varies between Duquesne, Whitaker and the Waterfront.



All SVTC members are welcome to attend.

For more information (including the next location): info@steelvalleytrail.org or 724-405-7882.

Not a member of the SVTC? Has your membership lapsed?

Please consider joining or renewing today by visiting
steelvalleytrail.org/member.htm on your computer.



Alternately, scan the QR code on the left to go to our mobile membership and donation page.



Get updates as they happen!
facebook.com/SteelValleyTrail



Rivers of Steel Festival

September 20, 2015 at 10 AM to 4 PM

Rivers of Steel is excited to announce the **Rivers of Steel Festival** to be held at the historic Pump House at The Waterfront on Sunday, September 20 from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. The festival will highlight the region's rich ethnic, cultural, and folk traditions, new and old, and will include workshops, demonstrations, music, performances, food, craft and arts vendors, and much, much, more!!!!

The festival will include performances by:

XPOGO
Iron City Aerial
Mary Miller Dance Company
The Seams

Food and Drink by:

[Iron Oven Catering](#)
[The Olive Tap](#)
and more!



Workshops for all ages include:

[Shadyside Nursery](#) Terrariums
[Reuse, Recycle, Ply the Hook](#): A Crochet Workshop (using recycled materials) with Donna Dzurilla and Yvonne Harris
Pysanky Eggs with Larry Kozlowski;
Extending the Growing Season with Farmer Elliott of [Lengel Brothers Farm and Market](#);

Demonstrations and arts & crafts vendors:

[Abandoned Pittsburgh](#)
[Allegheny Cleanways](#)
[Alloy Pgh](#)
[Hey Baby Boutique](#)
[Hip Modern Soap Co.](#)
[Itza-U-Kala](#)
[Kustom Jewelry by BJK](#)
[Mobile Sculpture Workshop](#)
[Munhall Central Fire Department](#)
[North Avenue Candles](#)
[Drop and Pull Egg Art by Joe Borytsky](#)
[Shane Pilster of 82 Concepts](#)
[Steel City Grazers](#)
[Steel City Soils](#)
Watercolors by Peg Caine
[Zero Fossil](#)

The Rivers of Steel Festival is sponsored by the [Rivers of Steel National Heritage Area](#) and [The Waterfront](#).