The Rail-Trail Council of Northeast Pennsylvania is dedicated to renewing Northeast Pennsylvania’s historic pathways as recreational trails for all to enjoy.

The 3rd annual D&H Distance Run was held on September 12, 2010. Despite a rainy start, the race was a great success. 223 runners left the Forest City Trailhead at 9 AM with the first finisher crossing the line in one hour and 14 minutes. Race results can be found at www.nepa-rail-trail.org.

Thank you to all our volunteers and sponsors who made the race a success:

**D&H Run—Another Great Success!**

**Gold Sponsors**  
Gentex Corporation, Simpson, PA  
International Salt Company, Clarks Summit, PA  
Laser Northeast Gathering Company LLC, New York, NY  
Patsel’s, Waverly, PA

**Silver Sponsor**  
Lackawanna Heritage Valley Authority, Scranton, PA

**Bronze Sponsors**  
The Beacon Restaurant, Union Dale, PA  
Carbondale YMCA, Carbondale, PA  
CareGivers (America), Clarks Summit, PA

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There was an empty chair at November’s Rail-Trail board meeting. Long-time member and friend, Bruce Elliot Ross Sr., died Sunday, October 31, 2010 on his 88th birthday. The Ross Family are founding members of Rail-Trail Council and have been actively involved for over twenty years. Bruce will be remembered for his sense of humor and warm, compassionate kindness.

Memorial contributions may be sent to the Rail-Trail Council, PO Box 32, Union Dale, PA 18470.

**Calendar**

**February 24**  
RTC Dinner/Meeting 6:30 PM. Birchtown Stables, SR 2023, Union Dale

**March 24**  
RTC Dinner/Meeting 6:30 PM. Ben Mar Restaurant, Carbondale

**Snowmobile Season Near**

Northeast PA Sno-Trails are gearing up for another snowmobile season with numerous trail improvements, additional gates and more equipment. Volunteers are always needed for their Sunday work days. They continue to work towards a NY trail extension. Please remember all snowmobiles must have a trail pass, registration and insurance. Passes and maps are typically sent out just before the December 15th opening. All information and updates can be found on nepsnotrails.snowclubs.com

**WELCOME, NEW MEMBERS**

- Ann Dean, Ridgefield Park, PA  
- Froude De Quiliettes, Shawentown, PA  
- Ann Marie Furlock, South Williamsport, PA  
- Rich, Lisa & Richie Holden, Moscow, PA  
- Bert Prohaska, Binghamton, NY  
- The Whitehouse Family, Victoria TX  
- Tom Yednock, Gilbertsville, PA  
- Russ Klupatch, Union Dale, PA

**RENEWING MEMBERS**

- Charlie & Ginny Ahearn, Kingsley, PA  
- Elle & Pete Axford, Charlotte, NC  
- George Balunas, Herick Center, PA  
- Sophie Barkus, Thompson, PA  
- Gary & Debbie Bates, Waymart, PA  
- Marlyn Bernard, Pleasant Mount, PA  
- Gerald & Carlyn Bell, Phoebeville, PA

- Curt Bogart, Waverly, PA  
- Peg & Frank Brager, Forest City, PA  
- Alice Breg, Waverly, PA  
- F. Warren Breg, Jr., Dalton, PA  
- Raymond Brown, Thompson, PA  
- Florence Brown, Scranton, PA  
- Donna & Emil Buatti, Barbsinville, PA  
- Al Barton & Joan Carley, Lafume, PA

- Daniel Cawley, Commmack, NY  
- Joe & Ann Cherry, Starlight, PA  
- Joseph Chimiet, Jr., Pittston, PA  
- Grace Long & Peter Ciavante, Feastville, PA  
- Leonard Coddingdon, Dingmans Ferry, PA  
- Casey Condon, Union Dale, PA  
- William & Barbara Connor, Union Dale, PA  
- William Culume, Susquehanna, PA  
- Lef & Marge Cunningham, North Gibson, PA  
- Frank Curker, Keyport, NJ  
- Robert & Helen Danner, Owego, NY  
- Alfred Dfeof, Starlight, PA  
- Tom & Joan DeMatteo, Roaring Brook Twp, PA  
- Steve & Cindy Detwiler, Susquehanna, PA  
- Robert Dietz, Forest City, PA  
- Joseph Dolce, Thompson, PA  
- Mark Dorish, Simpson, PA  
- Joseph & Marie Dragwa, Simpson, PA  
- Christine Elder, Carbondale, PA  
- Ted & Pattie Evansh, Scott Township, PA  
- Faith Fleming, Waverly, PA  
- Howard & Jill Fragn, Clarks Summit, PA  
- Marian Francieski, Forest City, PA  
- Jack Fries, Vanding, PA  
- Thomas Fron, Johnson City, NY  
- Grace Gholsey & Mike Bahng, Union Dale, PA  
- Amir & Lin Gundon, Union Dale, PA  
- Dr. Ralph Grombo, Pooyente, PA  
- Fran Graylock, Forest City, PA  
- Michael Happstak, Scranton, PA  
- Mary Jo Hart, Brackney, PA

- Ottomin Hetrch, Trevoux, PA  
- Alan & Linda Highhouse, Honesdale, PA  
- James Hill, Waymart, PA  
- Laura Hostert, Philadelphia, PA  
- John & Nancy Hollenback, Greenfield Twp., PA  
- Anne Holmes, Shavertown, PA

- David & Jo-Ann Honner, Lower Gwynedd, PA  
- Robert Hunter, Union Dale, PA  
- Matt & Tammy Hunter, Union Dale, PA  
- Neil Jordan, Forest City, PA

- Nancy Kelly, South Gibson, PA  
- William Kelf, Simpson, PA  
- Ralph & Bobbie Kirsch, Jackson, PA  
- Jim & Carol Kline, Pottstown, PA

- Mary Jo Kneeland, Equinunk, PA  
- Edward Kowalieski, Forest City, PA  
- George & Geraldine Kroos, Pooyente, PA  
- Elenor Kurys, Montrese, PA

- Lackawanna Bicycle Club, Scranton, PA  
- Julia Laird, Dunmore, PA  
- Frederic & Nelly Lemke-Lally, Nicholson, PA

- Linda Lee, Thompson, PA  
- Shirley Leslie, White Mills, PA  
- David & Michelle Lukens, Union Dale, PA  
- Richard Musiulski, Peckville, PA  
- John Marx, Scranton, PA

- Robert & Angel Marx, Union Dale, PA  
- Inger Pearson & Frank Mshould, Union Dale, PA  
- James McKane, Archbald, PA  
- Mr. & Mrs. Jim McKane & Sons, Archbald, PA  
- Robert & Elaine Memble, Weatherford, VT

- Vic & Sharon Milani, Dickson City, PA  
- Robert & Elaine Memble, Weatherford, VT  
- Millett real estate, Scranton, PA  
- Thomas Munziaynt, Waymart, PA

- Joe & Harriet Moore, Gladwyne, PA
DONATIONS IN MEMORY OF BRUCE ROSS

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Diana & Winnie Conley, Clifford, PA
Cheryl Wellman (COD), New Milford, PA
Jane & Matthews, Union Dale, PA
Todd & Colleen Bobowick, Dalton, PA
Constance Telpin, Clifford Township, PA
Curt Biggart, Waverly, NY
Kirk & Helen Newson, Union Dale, PA
Maureen & Bill Kupiec, Union Dale, PA
Bob Hunter, Union Dale, PA
Boz Boomier & Sally Fischbeck, Clifford, PA
Scott Lind, Wilkes Barre, PA
Richard & Marilyn McDonald, Kingsley, PA
Harri & Peggy Newark, Greenfield Township, PA
Bill & Linda Drue, Greenfield, PA
Paul & Linda Bezak, Waymart, PA
Anna Shiles, Paoli, PA
Jim & Linda Proctor, Union Dale, PA
Alice Brice, Waverly, PA
Carri & Nancy Harvistine, Thompson, PA
Dorance Belin, Waverly, PA
* Mr. & Mrs. Lytle Cunningham, South Gibson, PA
Wanda & Bud Davis, Rothesoh Beach, DE
Kuni Roberst, Stroudsburg, PA
Joyce & Stan Wierzbicki, Greenfield Township, PA
June & Ken Walters, Nicholson, PA
Inger Pearson, Palm City, FL
John Race, Carbondale, PA
Ellie & Pete Mathurin, East Stroudsburg, PA
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Donna Minkler, Pinehurst, NC
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Jerry & Kathy Franchesi, Union Dale, PA
Al & Diana Galiani, Clarks Summit, PA
Joan Seely, Valley Forge, PA
Evelyn Pantzar, Forest City, PA

Was it all real?

About seventy-five years have gone by since they closed No. 2 Shaft, halting underground anthracite mining within the immediate Forest City area. The great breaker, now merely a crumble of concrete, ran for a few more years, processing and shipping strip-mined coal that had been delivered to it by truck. Simpson’s vast Northwest colliery complex was operated into the nineteen-fifties, also as a processor of strip-mined coal. Later, what had been the Northwest site came under the control of Fell Coal, but now even that last holdout has expired. Only traces of what had once been the second-largest industry in America (railroads were first) are left. Within the towns, the traces are few, and you have to know where to look for them.

If you walk the town, you’ll find nothing graveyards etched ‘here lies a coalminer.’ You’ll have to look carefully. You’ll find some of the miners when you spot graves in which husband and wife are side-by-side, with dates showing that she had outlived him by many, many years. This guideline works only infrequently, though, because many colliery casualties were young, single, new to America and without families here. Some of these were buried with wooden grave markers that have been obliterated by the elements, and so lie in graves that are effectively unmarked. Others lie in graves that may not have been marked at all. These men and boys lie as de facto unknown soldiers in the war on coal. It is widely known that anthracite mining was a woefully dangerous business. What is less widely recognized is that the price of the forty million-odd tons of coal extracted from the dozens of mines along what are now our Rail-Trails was close to three hundred and fifty dead.

Our Colliery Commemoration project, which has the goal of placing Trailside markers identifying, by site and by name, every man and boy killed at what it is fair to call our collieries, started more than two years ago. Its research phase is now nearly complete. We have all of the names, and are now at the work of final checking. In our work, we have gotten to know many things about the miners and other colliery workers who were killed.

Please notice that we have written ‘men and boys.’ That is because thirty-five of our dead were teenagers. A previous article in this space told of the worst single accident at any of our rail-trail collieries, an 1890 incident at Simpson’s Northwest breaker that claimed fourteen-year-olds. By what is right, most of those kids should have been in school. Instead, they were the breaker boys, the nippers, the spargers, the door boys, the mule drivers. The dead.

We have also here observed that mining was a young man’s game. Just about a third of those killed were men aged 20 to 29. These were, for the most part, miners’ helpers. It was virtually universal practice in the northern anthracite field to do the full frontal work of mining, that is, mining at the actual faces of coal seams, in two-man teams: miner and helper. Both worked hard, but the helpers did the real dog-work. Their days consisted of endless shoveling and loading, getting the hard coal into the mine cars by muscle power. The work was accomplished at the most dangerous site in the mine, that place usually called the ‘face of coal’ or ‘face of rock.’ Alas, anthracite mining engineering had not gotten around the simple logistical truth that huge breakers crushed, sorted and cleaned coal more economically than small ones, and breakers on the scale of Forest City, Clinton and North West required small armies of these two-man teams. In 1914, Forest City colliery had 1,539 employees. That same year, Vanding’s Clinton colliery had 804. ‘The Northwest,’ in Simpson, had 351. As a rule-of-thumb, About eighty percent of colliery workers were ‘inside men’ inside what? Inside the earth.

Although the ‘face’ was most dangerous, no colliery site could be called safe. Workers were killed in dozens of ways. Some fell into shafts. Some were crushed by runaway mine cars. Others were electrocuted; soon after Thomas Edison began to sell his heavy-duty direct current generators, mine owners installed them and used anthracite-made steam to power them. Open copper wires took the current into the mines for consumption by ‘electric mules’ and by the omnipresent pumps used to rid the tunnels of water. The unclad electricity took its toll.

And before mules—real mules, that is left the arena, they had a final, bitter say. A small number of our casualties were dispatched by being kicked by mules. Yeah, they really could kick.
The men and boys died in rough proportion to tonnage delivered. Forest City colliery, located at pretty much the exact site of the Rail-Trail Council’s parking lot, rang up just over 150 deaths in exchange for the 20 million tons it took from the earth. A mile south along our present-day trail, Vandling’s Clinton colliery accounted for over 70 deaths and yielded some 15 million tons. By the numbers, Clinton was a safer place to work than FC, but our miners didn’t have the data that we are able to view in hindsight. What’s more, there wasn’t a colliery that could be called safe.

Irony, never in short supply when we view history, is much in evidence when we look at the fact that the Forest City area suffered fifteen men killed in World War I. That happens to be the exact number of colliery deaths in the area in 1917 and 1918, the period America was at war. We admit to the making of an apples versus oranges (and statistically improper) comparison here, but we make it as a lead-in to the next paragraph…

…which emphasizes that colliery workers were, as we know from much literature, not given to viewing themselves as heroes in the sense that soldiers can be heroes. Every day, though, they went to those treacherous collieries, and they went by the thousands.

What they did has vanished from sight and is vanishing from mind. Was it all real? It may seem somewhat mythic now as we view miners’ monuments in many of our towns, many of which portray miners as figures larger than life. But they were flesh-and-blood, men and boys.

And gravestones.

Mark C. Walsh

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**Late Season Trail Projects**

A few projects are underway on trail sections in the Thompson and Starrucca areas. The Buck’s Falls ravine, the site of a former trestle bridge, is being graded and rerouted for snowmobile traffic. Erosion is always a problem here and someday switchbacks for all other trail users will need to be designed and constructed. At the “Thompson Curve”, the bridge ramp is being elongated with the grade reduced for easy travel. The mid-section hump of trail material is being used for the ramp, which will even out the grade in this area.

Pet Stations have been installed at the Simpson, Forest City and Union Dale Trailheads.

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**Membership Renewal Form**

Please renew! The date on the mailing label on the reverse indicates when your membership expires.

- [ ] Lifetime/Founding $500
- [ ] Patron/Sponsor $250
- [ ] Club/Organization $100
- [ ] Family $35
- [ ] Individual $20
- [ ] Senior/Student $15
- [ ] I am available for trail cleanups.
- [ ] Call me to discuss a corporate donation.
- [ ] Send me Sam’s Club Business Membership Card
- [ ] I am interested in finding out more about the ‘Trail Tender’ program.

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Please update your address here if necessary. Make checks payable to Rail-Trail Council of Northeast PA

P O Box 32, Union Dale PA 18470 Phone: 570-679-9300 E mail: trails@nep.net

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**Rail-Trail Joins Sam’s Club**

Rail-Trail invites current members to share in the benefits of our Sam’s Club business membership! Take advantage of business members-only shopping hours (7 am-10 am) and a discounted membership price of $35. Call the office for an add-on membership card or check the box on your renewal form and start saving!

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**Endless Mountains Trail**

A feasibility study of the Endless Mountains Trail, is underway by the Rail-Trail Council, supported through a grant from the PA Department of Conservation & Natural Resources. The Endless Mountains Trail was originally part of the Delaware, Lackawanna & Western (DL&W) Railroad as the ‘Montrose Branch’ that extended from Alford to Montrose. It operated for around 50 years bringing freight and passengers to and from Montrose. When it was abandoned in 1944, one of the nations’ first rail-trails was established, as the equestrian Bridgewater Riding Trail, later known as the Endless Mountains Trail. The feasibility study is underway to sort out ownership, maintenance and user issues as a public rail-trail. A public meeting is scheduled for mid-January.
Grant for Tree Trail

The Overlook Estate Foundation has notified the Council that a grant was awarded to help promote the Tree Trail along the D&H in Forest City. The Foundation is dedicated to the preservation and appreciation of the natural world, promoting activities that introduce, educate and advocate for increased awareness and responsibility for conservation. The grant will be used to develop a map of the trees along the trail, along with educational materials for identifying various tree species.

My View from the Trail

Sometimes I forget how lucky I am that part of my job involves being on the D&H Trail. Community walks, bike rides, runs and special events bring me out of the office and into nature. Once on the trail, I’m immediately reminded of the history of my community. I think about the hard work and struggle endured by the workers who built the railroad. It also reminds me how important it is to work toward our mission to renew the pathways they worked so hard to create.

Trails create healthy recreation and transportation opportunities by providing people with attractive, safe, accessible and no-cost places to bike, walk, hike and connect with nature. Even in our rural community, there are times when using the trail is a viable alternative to driving. Using and supporting the trail won’t change in a measurable way our dependence on foreign oil but it is a step toward energy conservation, environmental protection, and better health. One way you can help is to “adopt” one of our community walks. We hope to increase participation in our walks by enlisting the help of members “to get the word out”. If you would like to take the lead in a community walk please call the office.

See you on the trail,

Deb McNamara

Adopt the pace of nature: her secret is patience.

—Ralph Waldo Emerson