Bridge Work Complete

The D&H Rail-Trail has now reopened with the completion of the bridge project, north of Forest City. The railroad bridge over the Lackawanna River was redecked with concrete adding asphalt approaches. New railings, approach safety fences and an access-control gate were installed. The project took just under one month to complete!

The project was sponsored by the PA DCNR Community Conservation Partnership Program with Environmental Stewardship Funds and PA Recreational Trails Program from the Federal Highway Administration. The Rail-Trail Council of NEPA, Inc. provided matching funds, mostly raised through D&H Distance Run events.

The project engineer was Dave Osborne, Jr. of Ceco Associates, Scranton and the contractor was Tim Brennan of Brennan Construction, Carbondale.

Grants Announced for Three More Bridge Projects!

The Council was recently notified that it received a Greenways, Trails & Recreation Grant through the Marcellus Legacy Fund of the PA Department of Community & Economic Development. The grant will rework and add a guardrail to the Brandt bridge that crosses the Starrucca Creek in Harmony Township.

Also DCNR has awarded the Council, Pa Recreational Trails funding for the second bridge north of Forest City and the trestle bridge in Lanesboro (left). New asphalt approaches, railings and signage will be included. Hopefully at least one bridge will go out to bid this coming Spring 2014!
Folks who live in and about Northeastern Pennsylvania like to visit Steamtown National Historic Site in Scranton. When they do, the first exhibit they see is “Big Boy” No. 4012, one of 25 just like it, built for the Union Pacific Railroad in 1942. You can’t miss it. It sits right there at the Steamtown entrance, and it is, to overwork the old expression, larger than life. Weighing in at 772,000 pounds, Big Boy was entirely deserving of its nickname. It weighs a mere 28,000 pounds short of 400 tons. Because it was prodigiously heavy, many, including some experienced rail-fans, will tell you that Big Boy was the largest steam lokie ever built. They do so in good faith, but they’re wrong. The largest steam lokie ever to smoke was operated on our pre-trail rails by the good old, down-home Erie. That’s right! Would we kid you?

Before we explain, a short digression: There is a standard shorthand, called Whyte notation, used to explain and identify steam locomotives. It simply counts the number of leading wheels (technically called pilot wheels), then the number of driving wheels and finally the trailer. Here’s a short table listing the heavyweight champions of the steam age:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Locomotive</th>
<th>Whyte Notation</th>
<th>Built</th>
<th>Weight</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Erie Triplex</td>
<td>2-8-8-2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>857,000 lbs.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C&amp;O Allegheny</td>
<td>2-6-6-6</td>
<td>68</td>
<td>778,000 lbs.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Union Pac. Big Boy</td>
<td>4-8-8-4</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>772,000 lbs.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DM&amp;IR Yellowstone</td>
<td>2-8-8-4</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>717,000 lbs.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Virginian</td>
<td>2-10-10-2</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>654,000 lbs.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

C&O means the Chesapeake & Ohio Railroad; DM&IR the Duluth, Mesabi & Iron Range. The table, which is a much-simplified piece of work that some dedicated steam railfans may object to for its lack of asterisks, makes it clear that the Triplex wins on sheer poundage. But why, you may ask, were so few built? The answer lies alongside our suspicion that the word “whoops” was often heard in the Baldwin Locomotive Company’s Engineering Department. Baldwin built the Triplexes for the Erie, beginning in 1914.

Look at the picture again, and note that the placement of the third set of drivers was under the tender. Whoops! Not enough space in the tender, making this super-lokie too quick to run out of coal, or water, or both. And whoops! Not enough weight on the rear set of drivers, especially when coal/water ran low, producing a tendency to spin. Spinning one’s wheels was the ultimate no-no. It could, and sometimes did, cause the engines to race, and there by draw the fire out through the stack. And whoops, the Triplexes were too large for the Erie’s own shops; their maintenance had to be outsourced, adding to cost. That’s why only three were built for the Erie. Later, a single 2-8-8-8-4 was built for the Virginia Railway.

These behemoths clanked along our rail-trail during the early years of the 20th century. They were used as pushers, because they had too much oomph for the wood-framed freight cars (including coal cars) of the early days; if used as drivers, they would have torn trains apart. Whoops!

Like the D&H 1600-series 0-8-8-0’s, they pushed coal up and over “Forest City Mountain” by the millions of tons during the age of anthracite. They were built, after all, with that 1.480/0 grade just south of Vandling in mind. The last of the breed was cutting-torched in 1933.

Mark C. Walsh
The Simpson Connector

A ribbon-cutting was held on November 1st opening the three newly-decked bridges in the Vandling and Fell Township area of the D&H Rail-Trail. Thanks to the Lackawanna Heritage Valley for taking the steps necessary to acquire this ‘missing mile’ and connect the D&H to the LRHT (Lackawanna River Heritage Trail), that continues from Simpson through the valley into Scranton and down to Duryea. This connection serves to join our properties and form a 70-mile trail. It connects Lackawanna County to Susquehanna County, urban areas to rural areas; it also connects two heritage areas—the Lackawanna Heritage Valley to the Endless Mountains Heritage Region. This scenic mile follows the Lackawanna River closely, crossing it four times within a mile. Rocks cuts and stone walls are common. There are bridge abutments from the Northwest Junction – a short rail line that connected coal mines on the Moosic Mountain (east) to breakers on the west side of the trail. The Simpson Trail Connector is slated for surface and drainage improvements as grant funds through DCNR were just announced. But the trail is very user-friendly as is. Get out there and enjoy as you explore whether on foot or by bike!

Linde Corporation Donates Services

Now that the connection has been made between the D&H and the LRHT, the Rail-Trail Council needed to re-establish the entrance to the D&H under the Simpson Viaduct. Thanks to Linde Corporation who maintains a facility in the nearby Carbondale Industrial Development Authority, heavy equipment and manpower accomplished a much needed cleanup. Over five days, work was done on a quarter mile of trail from Morse Avenue north, under the viaduct to the new entrance gate. The trail had many waterholes, overgrown brush and trash. The area is now graded with drainage improvements, brush was cut back and chipped and the trail leveled and compacted. Trash was removed and the area blocked off to illegal vehicle access. Thanks to Scott Linde and workers for helping to spruce up this area.

Kuni Holbert Receives Ben Franklin Award

A long-time community servant and Rail-Trail Board Member, Kuni Holbert, was honored on Nov. 14, 2013 by the Wayne County Community Foundation for her years of service. The Community Foundation Board of Directors chose to honor Kuni by presenting her with the Ben Franklin Community Service Award, its highest recognition. The award is named after one of the founding fathers of the United States, Benjamin Franklin and brings with it a $1,000 grant from the WCCF which may be designated to a charity of the recipient’s choice. Kuni chose to share the grant with Rail-Trail Council and Lakewood Fire and Ambulance.

Through the years Kuni has been and continues to be an active community servant. She has been on the board of Rail-Trail from its beginning and had served on many committees over the years. Kuni has led an extraordinary life and brings knowledge and compassion to everything she does.

Day of Caring

Williams, a gas and oil energy company, held a Day of Caring on October 8th for various non-profits in the area through the United Way of Susquehanna County. A great crew of volunteers assisted the Rail-Trail Council with landscaping at the Forest City Trailhead on the D&H Rail-Trail. The trailhead sign was overgrown with perennials and weeds. The Williams volunteers completely removed all the vegetation, replanted and mulched the area. Thanks to Lambertson’s Farm, Thompson for the donation of daylilies.

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.
- Send my newsletter electronically (instead of by mail) to: __________________________
- Send me a brochure.

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
Exploring the Northern D&H

The historic Starrucca Viaduct was the backdrop for a fall walk/bike ride on the northern D&H Rail Trail. The event started in Luciana Park in Lanesboro where hikers were shuttled to Brandt for a walk back along the Starrucca Creek. The walk paralleled a scenic section of the Creek and also highlighted the areas targeted by Friends of the Starrucca Creek during their spring cleanup effort. Afterwards the group met at the Viaduct Inn in Lanesboro for a picnic and to share ideas for the spring 2014 clean up.

The Friends of the Starrucca Creek’s mission is to inspire people to come together to make the stream a better, safer, cleaner place to enjoy the outdoors. During their spring cleanup, 4 tons of garbage and 20 tons of tires were removed from areas along the Starrucca Creek. If you would like more information or would like to be part of future cleanups visit their facebook page or call the Rail-Trail Office.

Pictured from left to right: Corinne van Niekerk, Adrianna Rockwell, Duncan Carpenter, Airlly Rockwell discover an old rail-road spike.

Winter Trails Days

Winter is just around the corner and all predictions point to a cold and snowy season. If Mother Nature cooperates we plan to host several “Winter Trail Days.” If you are new to winter sports, cross country skiing and snowshoeing are easy to learn, fun for all ages and a great way to chase away the winter blues. Check our website for information on special trail day events. So whether you are a seasoned athlete or just want to try something new, join us for fun followed by hot chocolate at Cable’s Deli!


Cross Country Skis and Snow Shoes are available for rent or sale at Chet’s Place (570-679-2129 or www.chetsplace.com).

New Gate on Mile One

The start of our trail has a new look! Thanks to a grant from Pocono Forest & Water Conservation Landscape, Pennsylvania Environmental Council and Lackawanna Heritage Valley we have a new gate on the D&H in Simpson just north of the viaduct. This section of trail was not used for many years because of ownership issues and unimproved railroad bridges, and often the site of illegal dumping and vehicle use. Now that the connection is open it eliminates the need for using the O&W as a bypass trail. We hope our new access control gate and more trail users will be a deterrent to future illegal activities.

Happy Birthday Nancy Ross

November 22nd marked a milestone birthday for Rail-Trail founding board member Nancy Ross. We would all like to wish Nancy a happy birthday as she celebrates her 80th Birthday. Over the years Nancy’s energy and volunteer spirit has been a role model for many of us at Rail-Trail. Congratulations and best wishes for a wonderful year.