Trail Improvement Plans

This year plans are being made to redeck three railroad bridges along the D&H Rail-Trail. The first bridge will be the Brandt bridge on the northern section of trail, south of Lanesboro. This project is sponsored in part by a grant from the Marcellus Legacy Fund and will include an access control gate at the trail crossing of SR 1009. The other two bridge projects to follow will be with PA DCNR Recreational Trails Grant funds. The Forest City north bridge and the Lanesboro bridge will both be decked with concrete with new railings. These projects will complete our goal to redeck all trail bridges.

A mini-grant from the Rails-to-Trails Conservancy will allow us to install a gate at the Lanesboro crossing of SR 1009 and do some trail grading work. This section of trail and adjacent stream has been cleaned up over the past two years by “Friends of the Starrucca Creek.” We want to keep this scenic trail section as pristine as possible.

Finally work will be done on the Ararat Road trail crossing. This area of the railroad was filled in after a bridge was removed that crossed over the railroad. In order for us to continue with trail improvements, earthen ramps of less than 5% grade must be constructed. We are going to begin work on the south side this Spring and hopefully get to the north side this Fall (with a potential grant).

We also will be continuing with routine trail maintenance and may grade and resurface various ‘wet spots’ along the first 10 miles of D&H.

Saturday, June 21

Join us in Union Dale on Saturday, June 21 for our third annual celebration of local art and crafts! The event will be from 10 AM–4 PM and will showcase over 25 local art and craft exhibitors showing their work in three historic buildings. In addition to a variety of fine art and crafts we have a day of special events planned including:

10 AM: Caroline Seamans from the Countryside Conservancy will lead a bike ride on the trail.

11 AM: Join Pat Peltz on a walk back in time to learn about Union Dale’s history.

1 PM: Children and adult nature photography class with Sherry Sparks. Bring a camera.

2 PM: “Let’s Get Wet!” an exploration of what lives in the rivers and streams near the trail.

Of course Cable’s Deli will have their delicious chicken BBQ. Advance sale tickets available at the Deli.

This event increases public knowledge and appreciation for local art and crafts while fostering partnerships that help connect the community to the trail. All our events would not be possible without the help and dedication of our volunteers. If you would like to volunteer please call or email our office, 570-679-9300 or trails@nepa.net

Activities take place close to the Union Dale Trailhead. A complete listing of exhibitors can be found on our website: www.nepa-rail-trails.org
Simpson: the Railroad Years

Three railroads once dominated the landscape of Simpson: the D&H, the Erie, and the NYO&W. These, along with its rock, ash, and culm dumps plus the “Lokie” trains carrying newly mined coal from the Wilson Creek area mines southward to the breaker, left no doubt that Simpson was a coal mining and railroad town.

The Delaware & Hudson Railroad had a dominant presence with its huge railroad yard located on the western side of the Lackawanna River. Beginning just south of Simpson’s Main Street viaduct, it extended southward to Carbondale’s Westside. Although called the Carbondale Yards, much of the trackage was located in Simpson.

The yard, built in 1872 was enlarged in 1888 and further improved from time to time to furnish the necessary facilities for the railroad’s ever increasing need to haul the area’s anthracite to market. The yard’s facilities included a 41 stall roundhouse built to service, repair and rebuild the railroad’s steam engines, plus car maintenance facilities and a power house. Also included were engine dispatching facilities such as coaling stations, ash pits, and water supply towers. Trackage included running, receiving, departure, transfer and storage classification. In 1915 the yard had a capacity of 3139 cars. The yard had spurs to service Simpson’s Carbondale Machine Shop and the American Welding Works. Both located just east of Midland Street. Additionally, a prop track and spur serviced the Hudson Coal Company’s Lackawanna drift mine at the foot of Midland St. The yard had a connection between the D&H railroad on the west side of the river with the NY&O W on the east side. From this interchange, spurs serviced the Fell Brewing Company and the General Textile silk mill (now Gentex).

Going north out of the D&H yard, the first rise of the Ararat grade was 410 feet in a bit more than six miles to Forest City. This was the most difficult section because it was the steepest for such a long distance.

In the 1940’s, the D&H had a selection of steam motive power used to negotiate this grade. The largest was the Challenger, class J, 4-6-6-4, a massive single expansion articulated steam engine built by ALCO. These had an engine weight of 597,000 pounds. The weight on the drivers was 406,500 lbs: 205,500 lbs on the front and 201,000 lbs on the rear engine drivers. The extra front driver weight was required to overcome slipping of the front engine when climbing one and one-half percent grades. It was an impressive sight to watch these giants begin their northward journey along the river out of the D&H yard.

Simpson youngsters who grew up with huge steam engines virtually in their back yards will always look back in awe because few items of their childhood have captured their mind and hearts as the steam engine. The engines, black and sooty, belched black smoke that would rain cinders. These cinders often made the winter snow gray and were the scourges of Simpson’s women who had just hung out their wash to dry. Children scurried across the viaduct to be in the smoke that enveloped the bridge under which the giant locomotives passed. The coal trains originating in the D&H yard traveled slowly northward as they passed under Simpson’s viaduct. They traveled slow enough for older boys to hop the freight for a ride to Panthers Bluff for a swim in the cold mountain stream with its rapids, pools and falls. Standing under the ice cold water always took one’s breath away.

More adventurous boys would daringly (and foolishly) jump off the viaduct atop the slow moving coal cars below. The younger boys would have to be content to walk the tracks northward to their favorite swimming hole. They were content in the knowledge that boys of all ages would have to walk back home because southbound trains would drift downhill from the Ararat Summit at speeds much too fast to hop aboard. It seemed that the wives of the engineers, fireman and brakemen would often pack their lunches with an extra banana or orange as treats to be tossed to the appreciative youngsters walking along the tracks. Part of the walking trip toward Panthers Bluff would include walking the rails, searching for railroad spikes and, looking for burned signal flares that with chicken feathers attached made crude homemade darts. At times they would play catch with the telegrapher who occupied the signal shack located a few hundred feet north of the viaduct. If they had a penny they could spare, it was placed on the tracks for an on-coming train to flatten. Few things stay the same. The children grew up and went their separate ways. Coal mining died out because of the competition from heating oil, then gas. The steam engine was replaced with the more efficient diesel. The railroads built to haul anthracite to market, no longer had coal to transport. The railroads that once serviced the mines and the ‘Lokie’ trains are now almost forgotten and in the future may become known as the gateway to one of the premier rail-trails in the country!

This article was written by long-time member Eugene A. Warden in 1998. He passed away in 2006.
The 5th Annual Heritage Explorer Bike Tour and Festival is a fun, non-competitive, family-friendly event that features the Lackawanna River Heritage Trail. Hosted by the Lackawanna Heritage Valley National and State Heritage Area (LHV), the Bike Tour travels through 17 municipalities on a combination of rail-trails and neighborhoods. This amazing effort is due to the cooperation and partnership of community officials, first responders, local residents, Bike Tour sponsors, and volunteers. Last year, more than 450 people of all ages participated in the event! Register at lhva.org.

The Rail-Trial Council will welcome riders doing the “Union Dale Pusher”—a 45-mile round trip ride. Volunteers are needed (10 AM–2 PM) to hand out water & snacks and take pictures of the proud riders at the turn-around! Call the RTC office to volunteer!

**Quilt Raffle!** Thanks to long-time member Kathy Stevens you have a chance to win this beautiful hand-made quilt! It has a tranquil farm theme border framing a beautiful patchwork center. The quilt measures 53” x 48” and is suitable as a wall hanging, furniture throw, or gift! It will be on display at our office and “Art on the Trail” day. Tickets are $2 each or 3 for $5 and can be purchased by mail (include your name and phone number) or at the RTC office. Other items from Art on the Trail Day will also be included in the raffle. Drawing will be held at RTC June board meeting.

**Donations**

- In Memory of Connie Garber
- Nancy Ross
- In Memory of Sophie Barthas
- Lawrence Barthas
- In Honor of Randy & Bill Sutich
- Darin & Jolene Herter
- Nancy Ross
- Marvyn & Ginny Raphaelson

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

**Name**

**Phone Number**

**Street Address**

**E-mail Address**

**City**

**State**

**ZIP**

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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**D&H Distance Run**

The weather is finally looking like spring so dust off those running shoes and start training for the 2014 D & H Distance Run. If running 13.1 miles seems like a daunting task this year we added a 5k run option to our event.

The race will be held on September 7, starting at the Forest City Trailhead 9 AM. Last year we had over 280 runners and this year we expect a record turnout. The D & H Distance Run is RTC’s major fund raiser and 100% of the proceeds go to trail maintenance and improvements. Plans are to re-deck another railroad bridge (funds raised match a grant). It takes a small army of volunteers to make the race a success so if you would like to volunteer or become a sponsor please contact the Rail-Trail Office. You can register online at GetMeRegistered.com or our website.

So, if you are a runner or just want to cheer for one, join us for this year’s race. We promise you will get caught up in the excitement.
Trail Cleanup

May 3, 9 AM; Meet at Forest City Trailhead

Plan to clean up race & bike route (Simpson to Union Dale). You can bike or hike the route, bag trash & leave for pick-up!

RTC Social Media

Check out our latest news on Facebook: www.facebook.com/pages/Rail-Trail-Council/217943674924181

Tweet us @RailTrailNEPA

Find out everything you want to know about us on Pinterest: www.pinterest.com/railtrail/

True Friends Dog Walk

Mark your calendars! Join us on Saturday, July 12, 10 AM for a walk to benefit True Friends Animal Welfare Center. We will leave from the Forest City Trailhead for a one to two mile walk. Participants are asked to collect pledges in advance and will be collected at registration or make a donation the day of the walk. Prizes will be awarded for top three amounts raised. Come with your dog or your friends! No pet is required for the walk. All dogs must be leashed. For more information and pledge forms contact Laurie at 570-212-0356, homes@passrealty.com or trails@nep.net.

True Friends Animal Welfare Center is a 501c3 non-profit, no-kill animal shelter located in Montrose, PA. Serving animals in need throughout Susquehanna & Wyoming Counties. Also a safety net for our own pets if lost & not immediately reunited with you. Open daily 11:30 AM–4 PM. www.truefriendsanimalwelfarecenter.com

Adjacent Landowners

We have recently updated our address list of all adjacent landowners and hope you enjoy our newsletter. We like to keep you aware of our plans and trail events.

Summer/Fall Overview

JULY 5: Discover the Secrets of the D&H Rail-Trail Hike: Location TBA; 10 AM

JULY 12: Dog Walk Fund Raiser for True Friends Animal Shelter; Forest City Trailhead; 10 AM

AUGUST 2: Bike Ride sponsored by Cedar Bike & Paddle during Forest City Togetherness Festival; D&H Forest City Trailhead; 10 AM–12 PM

AUGUST 16: Community Yard Sale; Rail-Trail Headquarters/Susquehanna Studios Union Dale; 9 AM–2 PM

SEPTEMBER 7: D&H Distance Run Half-marathon and 5K on the D&H Trail; Starts at Forest City Trailhead; 9 AM

SEPTEMBER 14: Yoga walk to Stillwater Cliffs sponsored by Studio Be Wellness Center; Check our website for meeting spot; 2 PM

SEPTEMBER 21: Guided history bike ride on the D&H Trail, sponsored by Southern Tier Bike Club; Rail-Trail Headquarters, Union Dale; 10 AM

Check our website www.nepa-rail-trails.org for updates and changes. For more information email trails@nep.net or 570-679-9300.

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

Rail-Trail Council of Northeast PA
P.O. Box 32
Union Dale PA 18470
trails@nep.net
www.nepa-rail-trails.org

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