



Rachel Carson Trails Conservancy

P.O. Box 35 Warrendale, PA 15086-0035

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North Park Trail Mapping

By Marian Crossman

We are fortunate to have Allegheny County Parks Director Andy Baechle as a strong proponent of trails. He needs to have all the trails mapped in order to determine any future trail building plans. Numerous groups share this interest, since the trails are multi-use.

To that end, the county is in the process of mapping the trails in North Park. Work began slowly due to the extensive old trail network, the difficulty locating all the approved routes, the need to cut away invasive vines, and a minimal volunteer turnout. It began in September with a small group of hikers, and has continued throughout the fall.

Major help came from Brian DeVecchio who has succeeded in finding volunteers for North Park trail blazing. Brian serves as a member of the Friends of North Park, acting to assist the park management with voluntary support. In the spring they will be looking for volunteers to continue the blazing task as needed in the sections near the Police Academy, the nature area, and the swimming pool. Here's your chance to learn where all these trails lead! Please contact Brian at bwd@spkpowerlaw.com to learn when work groups are set up.

Last month additional help came from Mike Connors (724-

Rachel Carson Trail Challenge

By Steve Mentzer

The twelfth annual Rachel Carson Trail Challenge was held on June 21, with (mostly) excellent weather. We had 562 participants on the 34-mile Challenge, 166 participants on the 18-mile Homestead Challenge, and 17 families on the 8-mile Family Challenge.

To celebrate the 250th anniversary of the founding of Pittsburgh, participants were cast as members of the Forbes Expedition, which made its way across the rugged Pennsylvania wilderness to capture Fort Duquesne from the French. In our case, Fort Duquesne was the Beaver Shelter in North Park, and the various forts, such as Fort Bedford and Fort Ligonier, were checkpoints along the course. Volunteers dressed in period attire, and at North Park, reenactors from Wildwood Longrifles demonstrated their recreations of items from the era, and a

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935-9293) who did a lot of vine cutting. Mike would be pleased to meet up with others with a keen interest in North Park trails, who don't mind cooler weather and have the energy to accomplish something with their outdoor time.

This is an opportunity for anyone interested in trails to have an impact in salvaging some of the 'lost' public trails already within the park. You don't have to get your workout on the roadside going around the lake to be on a known trail. The routes make interesting outings that are convenient for many who live in the greater North Hills region.

Already Rachel Carson volunteer Rudy Duda has undertaken one area off North Ridge Drive, above Irwin Run, and sees the need to have more join in to get that part done. Please phone him at 412-487-4037.

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bagpiper played the music the Scottish Highlanders would have used in their celebrations.

We limit the number of participants in the Challenge in order to offer a better experience for everyone, and better manage the impact on the trail and landowners. The event gets more popular every year, and this year the 34-mile event sold out earlier than ever!

The Challenge raises funds for maintenance, upgrades, and preservation of our trails. Please help us continue this great tradition by becoming a volunteer or a participant. Next year, the Challenge is on Saturday, June 20, 2009. Mark your calendar!

Baker Trail Update

By Patty Brunner

Some years it feels like our volunteer efforts are in vain as the rain falls causing the multiflora rose, grass and weeds to outpace us and the warmth of the sun fading our blazes. But again this year several projects were completed and groundwork laid for future improvements that will hopefully help the Baker Trail live far past us. Everyone who helped was awesome! The sustainability of the Baker Trail falls completely on our volunteers and once again you did a fantastic job! Here's a quick rundown of the major accomplishments:

- An official northern trailhead sign was installed and a reroute was done to connect to the original trail.
- A two-mile reroute near the Gravel Lick bridge by volunteers from the North Country Trail Clarion Chapter, with some help from Conservancy volunteers, was completed. This was essential for the staging of the Baker Trail UltraChallenge in the north section.
- Construction of a 72-foot suspension bridge over Cherry Run at Crooked Creek by Keith Klos of the North Country Trail Allegheny Forest Chapter and Conservancy volunteers. Be sure to look for the spring dedication and hike announcement on the website.
- Two footbridges were installed in Cook Forest, a trail reroute and treadway improvements were all made with the help from a Keystone Trails Association work crew and Conservancy volunteers.
- Blazes were converted where the Baker Trail shares its treadway with the North Country Trail through Cook Forest. These 18 miles of trail are now in compliance with the new state policy that required two trails to utilize a single, unified blaze. The top half is North Country blue and the bottom half Baker yellow. This results in a cleaner and less cluttered look.

Baker Trail UltraChallenge

By Steve Mentzer

We've come full circle on the Baker Trail UltraChallenge. This year, we returned to the north section of the Trail for the fourth annual staging of the event, having finished the triumvirate last year.

On August 23, 42 solo and 4 relay team runners ran south from the northern trailhead. The course took them along the Baker Trail through the beautiful Cook Forest and various state game lands, down to Summerville. There they headed over rolling county roads to Brookville and finished at the YMCA downtown. Of the 42 who started, 33 finished within the 14-hour time limit. As well, all relay teams finished.

It was a lovely dry summer day, with morning temperatures around 60 and warming into the 80s in the afternoon. This was ideal for the 18 hikers on our new event, the Baker Trail Cakewalk, a 15-mile hike from the northern terminus to the Cook Forest fire tower.

- The Baker Trail became part of the Recreational Plan for Armstrong County.

Yes we still did our normal trail care, because that is paramount; our stewards continued to step up and take care of some sections, our weekend warriors also helped prepare the trail for the UltraChallenge.

A huge thank-you to all our volunteers who made this progress possible by donating their precious time. If you are interested in helping maintain a section of trail, please call Dewaine Beard 412-719-9904 or Patty Brunner 724-325-3224.



Cherry Run suspension bridge

For finishing all three segments, Karl Zellars received his unique commemorative rolling pin to display his three medals!

We are grateful to Tina Householder at the Brookville YMCA for her support and assistance. Runners appreciated being able to shower after a long day on the trail.

The UltraChallenge is the next step up for those who are looking for something more demanding than the 34-mile Rachel Carson Trail Challenge. A relay option is also available, for those who aren't yet ready for ultra-distance running.

The next Baker Trail UltraChallenge is on August 29, 2009 and covers the central section of the Trail. Check our web site for all the details!

North Park Trail Mapping from page 1

Park Naturalist Meg Scanlon has had scouts and other volunteers help with the removal of invasive vines, and other plants such as barberry, on Latodami Nature area land for many years. It is an ongoing problem for conservation of the native plant species in many regions of woodland. "There are many areas of woodland that are threatened by grape and bittersweet vines", she writes. "The scope of removal would be a full time, permanent job for a crew of foresters. There is no such staffing in the park. Volunteers are needed who could target select sites." Individuals, scout troops, church or other groups wishing to help may contact Meg at 724-935-2170 or mscanlon@county.allegheny.pa.us

The Rachel Carson Trail, maintained and blazed in yellow, includes a few miles in North Park's southeast corner. From the boundary below the Hemlocks development, it enters a steep ravine a quarter mile north of the railroad crossing at Sample Road. It leads up to the hilltop near South Ridge Drive, continues past playing fields and shelters, then heads down through woods near the old Arboretum, crosses Wildwood Road and the stream below the dam to reach its western terminus beyond the Beaver shelter on Babcock Blvd.

From there, hike north along the red blazed trail that leads along the east side of the hill and in a half-mile you are parallel to North Ridge Drive for a bit. It continues in woods above Irwin Run to an open field and a broad grassy gas line connection that leads down to the stream. In the valley there you can join the old roadbed that formerly served farms in the area. This is a fine area for birding, strolling and biking. Pine Township keeps the edges mowed and has marked its northern terminus, at Jackson Road, with a Community Trail sign. There is parking for those coming from the north. The Allegheny Land Trust (ALT) plans to preserve this Irwin Run land.

The ALT has entered into an agreement to acquire 75 acres here adjacent to North Park along northern Babcock Blvd. ALT is working in partnership with the Allegheny County Parks Department, which is interested in buffering North Park. In recent decades neighborhoods have grown up on all sides of the park. This acreage is one tract that has remained unchanged.

The property consists of woodlands, steep to gently sloping land, and Irwin Run, a tributary to North Park Lake. It is a quiet area for birds and other wildlife. Wetlands and the stream floodplain help capture silt and filter other impurities before reaching the lake. The mature woodlands hold back millions of gallons of water over the course of a year in the Pine Creek watershed, which becomes more prone to flooding with every development. The Pine Township master plan notes the former road in the valley as a proposed community trail.

A southern approach on North Park land is 100 yards north along Babcock Blvd. from the Beaver Shelter near the Rachel Carson Trail's western terminus. It is marked Irwin Road (Closed), but is open for non-motorized use. The first mile is old pavement, the second reverts to the grassed-over farm route.

ALT is scheduled to close on the acquisition by June 30, 2009 after private funds to match a state grant are raised. The total project budget is \$504,000. To date ALT has secured \$354,000 in state and foundation funding and needs the remaining \$150,000 to protect this area. For more information about this project or the ALT, visit www.alleghenylandtrust.org or call 412-741-2750.

Rachel Carson Trails Conservancy Membership Application/Renewal

Join RCTC leaders by volunteering for a role that suits your time and inclinations. There are many ways individuals can help! Make check payable to the Rachel Carson Trails Conservancy, P.O. Box 35 Warrendale, PA 15086-0035, a nonprofit 501(c)(3) organization.

I Am A	<input type="checkbox"/> New Member	<input type="checkbox"/> Renewing Member	<input type="checkbox"/> Former AYH	Date	Your mailing label notes last RCTC contribution date
Annual Dues	<input type="checkbox"/> Individual \$15	<input type="checkbox"/> Family \$25	<input type="checkbox"/> Supporting \$50	<input type="checkbox"/> Sustaining \$100	<input type="checkbox"/> Corporate \$250
<i>WHILE THEY LAST - RCTC t-shirt, with your membership of \$25 or more. Circle size: M, L, XL</i>					
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Street Address					
City, State, Zip					
Telephone		Email Address			Municipality
Contact Me For					
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<input type="checkbox"/> Baker Trail maintenance		<input type="checkbox"/> Community contacts		<input type="checkbox"/> PR/Publicity	

Event Calendar

Details and more events on www.rachelcarsontrails.org/events

Monday, December 29: Baker Trail Hike 10AM–2PM

A winter stroll on the Baker Trail. Location and distance TBD. Contact Patty at (724) 325-3224 or pabrunner2@yahoo.com for details and to sign up. **FREE and open to all!**

Saturday, Feb 7: Winter Outing 10:30AM–3PM

Join us for a 5–6 mile deep winter hike from the Harmony Trail to the Rachel Carson Trail! We'll meet at the Beaver Shelter on Babcock Blvd. in North Park and carpool to the start at the Harmony Trailhead on Rt. 910. Then we'll follow the Harmony Trail to the Brooktree spur, to the Bluebird Trail, to the Braille Trail, to the North Ridge Trail, and end at the Rachel Carson Trail western trailhead. Moderate difficulty (decent sized hills at Brooktree and going up to the North Ridge, otherwise gently rolling).

Hot tea, cocoa, and treats afterwards. For details and to sign up, contact Mark Eyerman at (412) 492-0375 bongofury@verizon.net or Marian Crossman at (412) 366-3339 dmc@pitt.edu. **FREE and open to all!**

Saturday, May 9: Volunteer & Landowner Appreciation Picnic 1PM–2PM

Calling all volunteers and landowners! Please attend our Volunteer & Landowner Appreciation Picnic where there'll be food and drink and lots of discussion about trail related topics. Takes place at the Cabin in North Park prior to our Annual Public Meeting. Contact Marian at (412) 366-3339. **FREE and open to all!**

Saturday, May 9: Annual Public Meeting 2PM–3PM

Join us as we discuss a year of progress and teamwork on the Baker, Harmony and Rachel Carson Trails in addition to details for

participants and volunteers on the Rachel Carson Challenge and the Baker Trail UltraChallenge. Takes place at the Cabin in North Park. Contact Marian at (412) 366-3339. **FREE and open to all!**

Saturday, June 20: Rachel Carson Trail Challenge

The twelfth annual grueling 34-mile endurance hike on the Rachel Carson Trail, plus the 18-mile Rachel Carson Trail Homestead Challenge and the 8-mile Rachel Carson Trail Family Challenge.

Saturday, August 29: Baker Trail UltraChallenge

The fifth running of the 50-mile Baker Trail ultramarathon and relay. It traverses the central section, starting in Summerville and ending outside Smicksburg.



Baker Trail Notecards Available!

Each pack contains two sets of 5 cards depicting beautiful views along the Baker Trail. Includes envelopes. Only \$9 per pack, including shipping. To order, call Marian at 412-366-3339.

Please check mailing label for record of your contact with the RCTC.

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**Preserving and Promoting
Community Trails in
Western Pennsylvania**



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