



Mon River Trails Conservancy

2011 Annual Report



"The trail serves as the walking and biking link between the river, neighborhoods, business districts, and communities in our region. It has totally transformed the way we think about Morgantown as a vibrant place to live and work. People use "the trail" for team practices, events, sight-seeing, outdoor adventure, errands--the connector between our daily activities."

*Jenny Selin,
Morgantown City Council*



The Vision

Working on a Rail-Trail



Since 1991, the non-profit Mon River Trails Conservancy continues its work to construct, manage, and maintain the Mon River and Deckers Creek Rail-Trails for walking, jogging, cycling, and cross-country skiing. Transecting three counties in North Central WV, this long linear park creates and promotes opportunities for recreation, alternative transportation, tourism, economic development, historic preservation, healthy lifestyles, and environmental conservation. Through innovative collaboration with community partners, government officials, and a diverse volunteer base, our trail corridors and waterfronts continue to be transformed from industrial wastelands to national examples of economic and environmental renewal.

A Long Linear Park

Our rail-trail is a long, linear park that ideally stays open and interconnected. However, several major landslides and hundreds of downed trees from winter storms and a wet spring temporarily blocked sections of the trail. Clearing the trail was possible because of the renewal of the innovative trail maintenance agreement, in its 6th year, with Morgantown Board of Park and Recreation Commissioners (BOPARC) and funding from the city of Morgantown, and Marion County and Monongalia County Commissions.

The stewardship ethic of the rail-trail continues with two notable trail projects in 2011. An Eagle Scout project added a new weather shelter near Little Falls on the Mon River Trail. Many volunteers, scouts, and family members helped with its construction and now it provides a place for rest and shelter from storms on an isolated, scenic section of trail. At Masontown, on the Deckers Creek Trail, work continues on a 1907 Elkins Coal & Coke Building with a clean-out and mothballing day in February and in November a day of acquiring and moving tons of roofing slate from Wheeling, WV to be stored on site. The Elkins Coal and Coke Building has brought together the most diverse partners and volunteers, from WVU classrooms and Preservation Alliance of WV to WVDEP, BOPARC, community volunteers, and non-profits on the other side of the state. All of us share in a common vision to adaptively rehab this historic building for visitor information and restrooms.



2011 State of the Trail

The Costs of Maintaining a Rail-Trail

Keeping the trail well groomed and protecting its surface from overgrown vegetation are critical to providing a useable trail for all. Routine maintenance of a rail-trail requires mowing the sides, trimming overhanging brush and trees, removing fallen trees, and cleaning ditches and culverts. Landsides outside of city limits cost, on average, \$2,000+ in crew and equipment to clear the trail of mud and debris. MRTC uses its 10-year old John Deere tractor to maintain the trail. In 2011, this tractor was used to mow and brush cut the 48-mile trail four times for a total of 384 miles. To keep this most essential piece of equipment up to date and functional, the MRTC purchased a brush mower attachment using a \$60,000 Department of Transportation Recreational Trail Grant.

From March-December 2011, a massive slip closed the rail-trail near the Seneca Center, between mile 8-9. Large long crevices in the asphalt trail surface continued to widen and deepen over several days. The slip also endangered the stability of two major pipelines for Morgantown's sewage. The Morgantown Utility Board worked to stabilize its pipelines and repair the trail. Closures such as this one, with no easy detours, brought greater appreciation to a fully operational trail for commuting, long distance exercise, and recreation.

Investment in Long-term Upkeep

The most difficult challenge facing the Mon River Trails Conservancy is the need for capital investment in the long-term costs of the rail-trail.

On average, a non-asphalt trail needs re-surfacing every ten years and for asphalt trails this number rises slightly to 15-17 years. The Deckers Creek Trail, our oldest trail has several sections in need of re-surfacing and inside city limits, the trail also needs of repairs from tree root damage that causes buckling to the surface. Costs for trail resurfacing outside of city limits are ~\$7,600 per mile while asphalt resurfacing is ~\$60,000 per mile.

Trail maintenance equipment includes a truck, trailer, and tractor, which are used almost daily year round. The tractor is starting to face more costly and time-consuming repairs, as parts become harder to replace.

Repair of damage caused by active landslides and undercuts from Deckers Creek are estimated to cost over \$300,000. In addition, MRTC needs to purchase a dump truck for use in removing mud and debris from active landslides along the trail.

The costs of needed long-term repairs exceed funds available from grants and the MRTC Endowment Fund with Your Community Foundation in Morgantown, WV.





Become a Mon River Trails Conservancy member
and help the rail-trail! Learn more at our website

<http://www.montrails.org>



2011 Rail-Trail Project Funders

Bikes Belong Coalition
Chingos Foundation
Department of Transportation Recreational Trail Grant Program
Dominion Foundation
Greater Morgantown Convention and Visitors Bureau
Hazel Ruby McQuain Charitable Trust
Mylan Charitable Foundation
REI/American Canoe Association Grant Program
WV Community Participation Grant Program
Preservation Alliance of WV
Monongalia County
Marion County
City of Morgantown
Contributing individuals and businesses

2011 Deckers Creek Trail Half Marathon Sponsors

West Virginia University Healthcare	Maxwell's Restaurant
City of Morgantown	Colasessano's Pizza
Morgantown RoadRunners	Pizza Al's II
AECOM	Rosa Pasta & Pizza
Dynamic Physical Therapy	Penny's Glasshouse Grill
Francis Engineering	Hampton Inn
Greater Morgantown Convention and Visitors Bureau	Classics 3
Health Works Rehab and Fitness	Ray's Pastries
Morgantown Running	Pepsi Bottling Group
Mountain State Blue Cross Blue Shield	Black Bear Burritos
Pat Wildeman	Power Bar
Wamsley Cycles	Shearer's Foods
Waterfront Jeep	Waterfront Place Hotel
WesBanco	Long Way Around
Dominion Post	Break Iron Bluegrass
	Falling Run Bluegrass Band

**Special thanks to MRTC volunteers for your time and skills
and supporting members, businesses, and agencies.**

Photos courtesy of Ella Belling, Daniel Boyd, Julie Black & iPlayOutside.com, Steve Shaluta & the Convention and Visitors Bureau of Marion County, and Dave Smaldone.

Design / Layout courtesy of Adam Flack.

Looking Ahead

- Continue to encourage the regional approach to trail maintenance, with the government and non-profit partnerships.
- Grow a larger volunteer base that monitors the trail and works on fund-raising, and trail projects.
- Work with law enforcement to protect the trail from vandalism and the safety of trail users.
- Develop trailhead parking and non-motorized boat access at the Van Voorhis Trailhead.
- Rehabilitate Masontown Trailhead 1907 Elkins Coal & Coke Building into information center and restrooms.
- Conduct an economic impact study with the National Rails-to-Trails Conservancy.
- Raise funds for trail maintenance equipment needed to maintain 50 miles of rail-trail.
- Raise funds for trail repairs and resurfacing needed on the Deckers Creek Trail.
- Research and develop smart apps for the rail-trail.
- Re-print 80,000 rail-trail maps for free distribution.
- Grow the Deckers Creek Trail Half Marathon and Trail Mix Festivities.



2011 Board of Directors & Staff

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