

LEADER TIMES

Armstrong Rails to Trails hopes to close the gap

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Monday, July 4, 2011

Despite the wet spring and a few weeks of heat, Armstrong Rails to Trails (ARTA) volunteers continued to self-build trail and to maintain 18 miles of finished trail. Donations to the organization's Chip N Trail Fund have been used to purchase crushed limestone which is being spread over newly graded sections.

Trail building efforts this year are focused between Grays Eddy and Hook Station. A grant was received from the Volunteer Fund of the Pittsburgh Foundation, which will be used to purchase additional limestone, letting ARTA add another mile of trail in this area.

For future work, a grant application was submitted by the Allegheny Valley Land Trust (owners of the trail corridor), requesting money to purchase materials to build a five-mile section between Lock & Dam 9 and Phillipston. A second grant was submitted for a feasibility study for a possible campground in the Phillipston area and to evaluate the Brady Tunnel for renovation as a future connection to the Allegheny River Trail.

These projects will reduce the unfinished section of the trail to six miles.

Once the gap is closed, bicyclists, walkers and cross country skiers will be able to use 30 miles of continuous trail.

ARTA is also working with neighboring trail systems in an effort to link trails together from Lake Erie to Pittsburgh. Although not complete and rough in sections, the Armstrong trail is "Ready to Ride." Membership is growing and more people are using the trail for fitness and leisure activities, according to the ARTA.

Other projects that have been completed or are in the works this year include improvements to the bridge across Mahoning Creek, a stream stabilization project at mile 47.75 outside of Kittanning and surfacing of the Cowanshannock Connector Trail.

A sewage plant project in East Brady will provide trailhead parking and restrooms along with a shared access road to the new plant and current trail starting point. This project is scheduled to start this fall.

Visit the website at www.armstrongtrail.org to learn more about the trail, activities scheduled and volunteer opportunities. The new trail map and guide is available at the Armstrong County Tourism Bureau and in many local

businesses in towns along the trail. For information contact the trail office at 724-543-1783.

ARTA Board of Directors meetings are held the second Monday of each month at 6:30 p.m. in the county commissioner's room on the second floor of the courthouse annex and are open to the public. The next meeting will be held July 11.

Meetings are preceded by group rides weather permitting. If anyone is interested to join a ride they are asked to meet in the parking lot of the courthouse by 5:30 p.m.

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