

Trails get \$500,000 in grants

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By Don Hopey, Pittsburgh Post-Gazette

State Department of Conservation and Natural Resources Secretary Michael DiBerardinis yesterday delivered three grants totaling \$500,000 for trail projects in Allegheny County.

Speaking in the Pump House along the Monongahela River in Munhall near the Steel Valley Trail, he said he hopes primary voters will follow the trail grants and other recreational and environmental preservation funding to approval of the Growing Greener II bond issue on today's ballot.

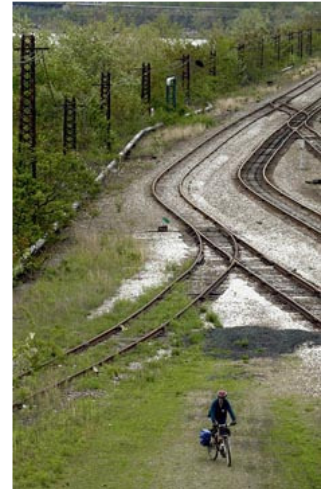
Approval of the \$625 million bond issue would provide continued funding for state park improvements, preserving natural areas, preserving working farms, cleanup of rivers, streams and abandoned mine sites and local park and recreation improvements.

"These trail projects are perfect examples of how Growing Greener can help improve the quality of life in communities," DiBerardinis said. "Not only do they provide a great place to enjoy the outdoors and connect us with our neighbors, our trails and greenways also spur tourism, protect open spaces, provide habitat for wildlife and stimulate community revitalization."

DiBerardinis gave \$200,000 to the Steel Valley Trail Council for acquisition of 22 acres in West Mifflin and Whitaker between Duquesne Boulevard and the Monongahela River.

The property, owned by U.S. Steel, contains an old coke and gas pipeline and an access road. It is a key 1.8-mile missing link in the Steel Valley Trail, which is part of the Great Allegheny Passage that eventually will connect Downtown Pittsburgh with Washington, D.C.

"We're working with U.S. Steel and we've got some work to do on the trail, but it's a spectacular setting, close to the river with great vistas," said Linda McKenna Boxx, Allegheny Trail Alliance president. "We're putting a full-court press on getting the trail done by 2008, when Pittsburgh celebrates its 200th anniversary."



Martha Rial, Post-Gazette

Roy Weil, of Oakland, pedals his bicycle near the Norfolk Southern railroad tracks along the Monongahela River in Whitaker -- a 1.8-mile missing link in the Steel Valley Trail. But that's likely to change soon after state Department of Conservation and Natural Resources yesterday awarded \$500,000 in grants for trail improvement projects in Allegheny County.

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Martha Rial, Post-Gazette

Maggie Feinstein, Michael Sobkowiak and Sean Brady, rear, of Venture Outdoors, bike past The Waterfront near the end of the Steel Valley Trail yesterday.

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Allegheny County Chief Executive Dan Onorato accepted \$250,000 for the Montour Connector, a two-mile link that will connect the Montour Trail with the South Park fairgrounds. The Montour Trail is a recreational rail-trail project in Washington and Allegheny counties that will stretch 47 miles from Coraopolis to Clairton.

Onorato pointed to a chart showing that the county has received 26 DCNR grants totaling \$3.2 million in the past 18 months.

"These are all parks- and trail system-related," Onorato said. "We're looking to open up the waterfront for recreational use with trails and docks and green space. Every one of these also has economic development happening along with it."

The Montour Trail Council received \$50,000 to repair flood-damaged areas of the Montour Trail. The trail was damaged in September by floodwaters.

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