



Trail Blazing

Ohio River bike trails project connects people with community BY JENNIFER MIFFLIN

For Vincent Troia, an ophthalmologist from Beaver County, the idea was obvious: Build a trail that would start in Monaca, extend to Coraopolis, and connect with the Montour Trail, part of the Great Allegheny Passage.

"This region has so much to offer," Troia says. "I wanted to promote access to existing rail trails, not only to promote bicycling and fitness opportunities, but as a means of establishing a multi-use trail along the Ohio River, in the water and trail towns."

Troia says the Ohio River Trail Council is an effort that offers a win-win for everyone, fostering recreation, health, transportation, cultural and historical amenities, education, charity, and the protection and conservation of natural resources. He also hopes it stimulates local economies.

Following an eye exam in December 2008, Troia asked Mario Leone, manager of Monaca Borough, his thoughts about building a greenway that would connect Monaca to Washington, D.C. Troia proposed his idea of how to make it happen. From there, it was full steam ahead.

"Mario really liked the idea, and together we approached Doniele Andrus, a Beaver County greenways planner," Troia says. "We all agreed it was a worthwhile project, especially the improved access to the riverfront."

In January 2009, they formed the Ohio River Trail Council, a nonprofit corporation that received its 501(c)(3) status. Such a designation allows corporate, foundation, government and private grants and donations to fund its mission

of creating a multi-use trail along the Ohio River and its tributaries.

The project has expanded to include both land and water trails from Allegheny County through Beaver County to the OH-PA-WV state line.

"The future Ohio River greenway will join with the progressing Tri-State Initiative, and link existing and planned pedestrian, bicycle, recreation, open space, and alternative transportation facilities in Ohio, Pennsylvania and West

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VINCENT TROIA, OHIO RIVER VALLEY TRAIL CEO

Virginia," Troia says.

Troia, an avid cyclist, wanted to link the trails to allow access to the region's natural beauty and fitness resources. "Through the ORTC, I have formed the ORTC Cycling Club, a recreational club that promotes health, wellness and fitness in our community through a variety of biking events," he says.

"Our goal is to encourage cyclists of all abilities to explore the wonderful trails in our area, from the urban land-

PHOTOS BY VINCENT TROIA



The Ghost Town Trail area (from left), the Lodge at Bradys Run Park and the Ohio River Beaver County P&LE Bridge.

scape of Pittsburgh to the rural scenery of Maryland, Ohio, Pennsylvania and West Virginia.”

The region’s trail system is more than a destination, he says. It’s a chance to bring people together. “Trails are a destination where neighbors greet neighbors and where new friendships are forged,” he says. “Often the cycling group enjoys lunch or dinner midway or at the end of the rides.”

ORTC Cycling Club members can be seen riding a variety of different models: city bikes, comfort bikes, cyclocross bikes, hybrids, mountain bikes, recumbents, road bikes, touring bikes and tandems. The group also promotes safe bicycle riding, and members serve as ambassadors for promoting a positive image of bicycling to the public.

The ORTC has been successful at uniting the 27 communities, two counties, and governmental agencies at the federal, state and local levels for a common cause to positively affect the greenway.

Private funding is critical to the organization’s long-term success. Troia explains most federal and state funding programs require a monetary match. And private sector support is paramount to completing and maintaining the trail project.

He says the evidence to support the development of trails—both water and land trails—is compelling. Once people understand how important using natural and cultural resources is, they’ll want to join the fitness trail craze.

To date, the ORTC has received funding from several organizations—the Pennsylvania Department of Conservation

JOIN THE FALL FUN

The ORTC hosts its first Gear & Beer Conservation Fallfest from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. Oct. 14 at Bradys Run County Park. Festivities include a mountain bike ride, 35-mile or 50-mile road bike ride, a 5K run/walk, kayaking and canoeing, a bike rodeo for kids, live music, beer tasting, food, drinks and more.



General admission, which includes access to vendors, conservation, heritage, trail groups and food and music, is \$10 for adults and \$5 for kids 13 to 17. Children 12 and younger are free. Bike rides, kayaking, canoeing, and the 5K run/walk are available at an additional fee. To register for the athletic events, visit OhioRiverTrail.org.

and Resources, the Port of Pittsburgh Commission, the First Energy Foundation, the National Park Service, the Environmental Protection Agency, the Beaver County Commissioners, and Venture Outdoors. Troia is confident the project will garner community and private support.

“Since the Ohio River Trail will help improve the quality of life and bring recreational tourism and economic development opportunities to the communities along the Ohio River, I am confident that our local corporations will find the Ohio River Trail project a worthwhile endeavor and become sponsors,” he says.

For more information or to donate to the ORTC, visit OhioRiverTrail.org.