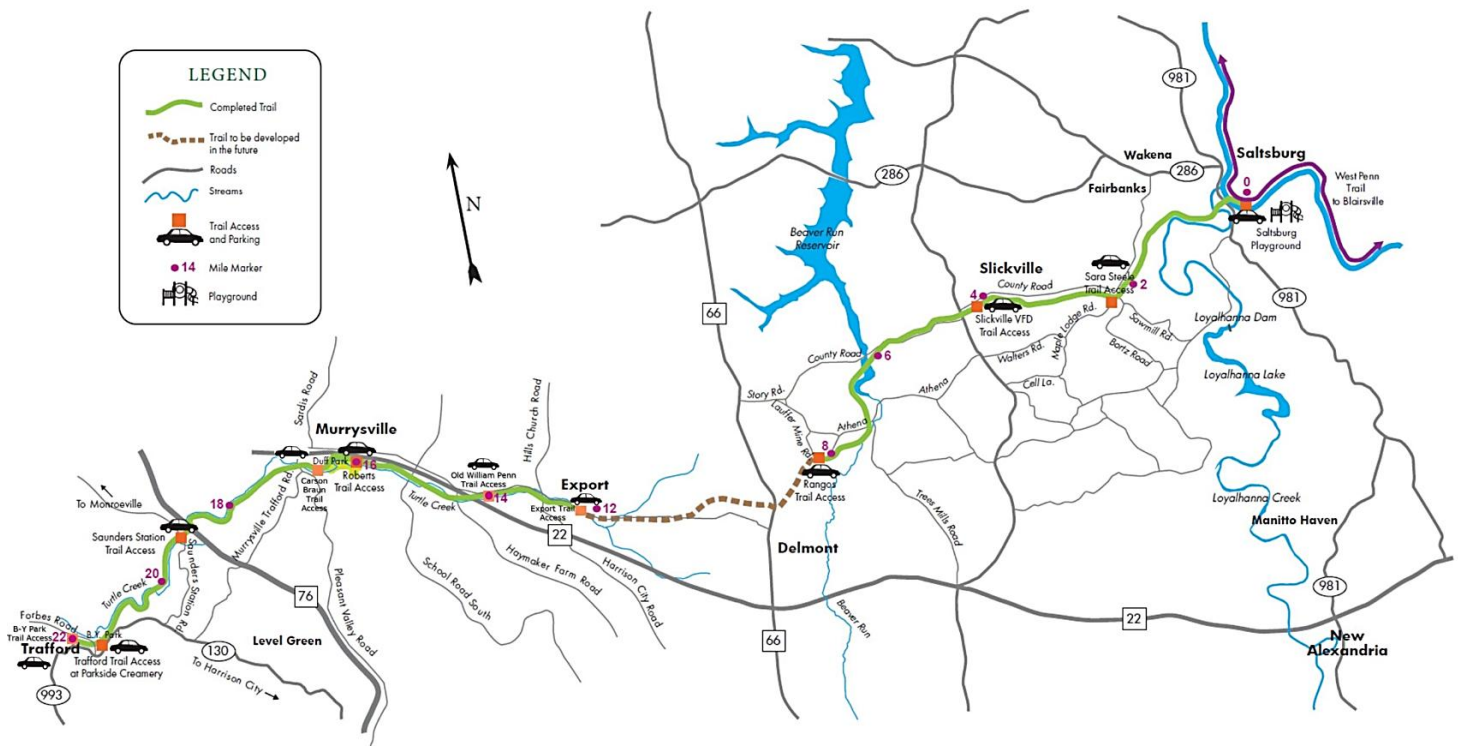




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Westmoreland Heritage Trail Fall 2026 Newsletter

The Westmoreland Heritage Trail



The Westmoreland Heritage Trail is managed by the [Westmoreland Heritage Trail Chapter](#) of the [Regional Trail Corporation](#), a non-profit 501(c)(3) organization. Eight municipal partners (Trafford, Monroeville, Penn Township, Murrysville, Export, Delmont, Salem Township, and Loyahanna Township) work with over 600 active chapter volunteers to maintain and monitor the trail. Other partners include the [Westmoreland County Bureau of Parks & Recreation](#) and the [Westmoreland Conservation District](#).

Westmoreland Heritage Trail Officers and Board of Directors

President: Stan Rudge (Penn Township Rep)
Vice-President: Rob Cronauer
(Westmoreland Conservation District Rep)
Treasurer: Chad Emahizer
Secretary: Karen Rose Cercone
Mike Banda
Michael Bertonaschi (Trafford Borough Rep)
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Jerry Detar (Salem Township Rep)
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Bureau of Parks & Recreation Rep)
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Brooke Russick (Loyahanna Township Rep)
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Annamarie Stackiewicz (Delmont Borough Rep)
Ann Wade

Westmoreland Heritage Trail Fall 2026 Newsletter



Autumn Trail Notes

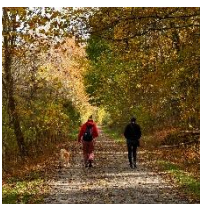
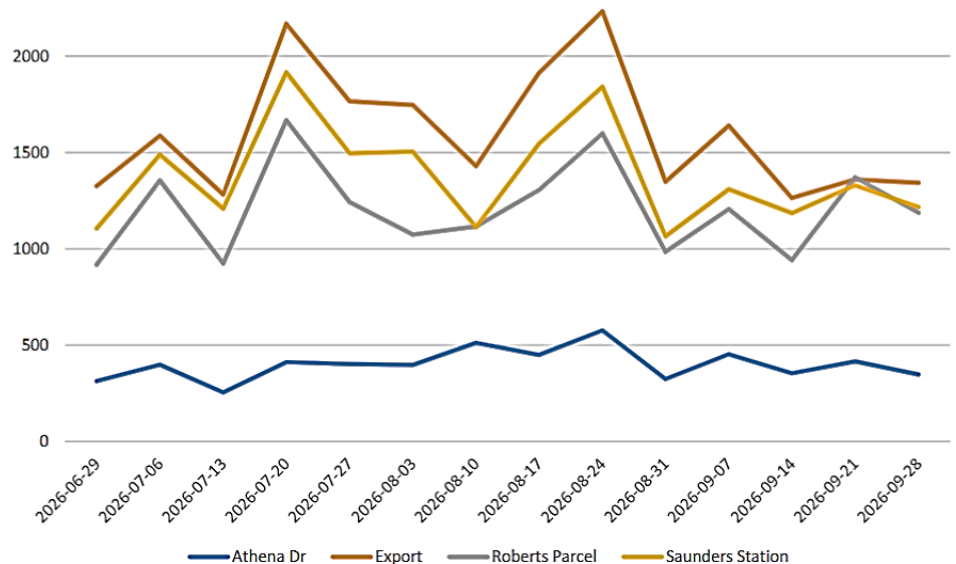
Happy autumn on the trail! We hope you have been able to get out and enjoy this recent stretch of beautiful fall weather despite the October hurricane. Fortunately, storm damage to the trail has been minimal, due to preventive maintenance done on drainage pipes and trail surfaces over this past year.

Our volunteer maintenance crews have been extra busy this summer, with the wet and windy weather of July and August bringing down many more trees than usual. We hope our trail members understand that our volunteer crews can only clean up trees once they have fallen. When they are dangerously leaning over or near the trail, we need to call in the professionals. That's where your observations and your donations are both so helpful! Be sure to report any downed or dangerous trees you see to our report line: 724-872-5586.

Our trail counters, faithfully monitored by volunteers Kathleen and Dan Sigg, show that usage of the trail remained strong despite the rainy summer.

2026 3 rd Quarter WHT Trail Counts					
Month	Athena Dr	Export	Roberts Parcel	Saunders Station	Monthly Total
2026-07-01	1601	7202	5440	6648	20891
2026-08-01	2056	7926	5559	6461	22002
2026-09-01	1643	5991	4843	5285	17762
3rd Quarter Totals	5300	21119	15842	18394	60655

Eastern trail counts (Athena Drive) always run much lower than on the western trail (Export to Saunders Station). If you find the western trail too busy on a weekend for your planned bike ride or dog walk, we recommend checking out the quieter sections of the trail near Slickville or Saltsburg. They are just as beautiful and well worth the drive, especially with fall leaves nearing their peak.



Cover photo: trail walkers and dog near Murrysville

Back cover photo: bike rider near Saltsburg

– both courtesy of John Beale



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New Trail Gates Installed Thanks to PEC and CNX

Four new sets of gates were installed this summer in the eastern section of the Westmoreland Heritage Trail over the summer and fall. The new design is much easier for walkers and bikers to pass through but it still keeps the trail secure from unauthorized motor vehicles. A lockable turning design allows our maintenance volunteers and contractors to access the trail easily when work needs to be done.

Funding for the new gates came from two sources. Three of the gates were purchased thanks to the TRAILS maintenance grant that WHT was invited to participate in by the Pennsylvania Environmental Council (PEC) earlier this year. A fourth gate was

funded by energy company CNX as part of their major gift to the trail chapter this year.



Funding doesn't get gates on the ground, however! The hard work of transport and installation was done by a group of our maintenance volunteers. Please thank them whenever you pass them on the trail for all of the amazing work they do.

Second Annual Export 100 Trail Race a Success!

The Westmoreland Heritage Trail (along with the West Penn Trail and trails inside Duff Park and Pleasant Valley Park in Murrysville) hosted the Export 100-mile endurance trail race on October 3rd and 4th. Six racers finished the entire course, two more than managed to complete it in 2025. The top two finishers ended up only five minutes apart by time (Brian Caskey taking 1st place with a time of 22:48:43 and Christoph Sauerborn taking 2nd with a time of 22:53:08). Four other racers completed the course with times ranging from 26 to 30 hours. This endurance race is getting some national attention and we anticipate that it will become a much more widely known and attended sporting event once the Middle Gap is closed and the Turtle Creek Connector Trail is completed over the next decade.



News from Other Trails: A New RTC Website

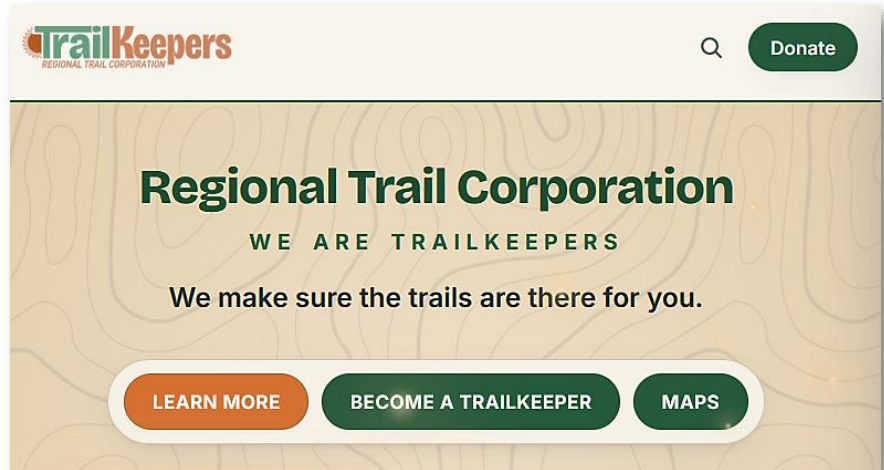
Note – this article is excerpted from the Regional Trail Corporation’s brand-new website. Click on <https://www.trailkeepers.net/> to explore more of the history, resources, and news offered by this site.

The Regional Trail Corporation (RTC) is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit founded in 1991. We were at the forefront of a wonderful, growing phenomenon: old, abandoned railroad lines transformed into greenways, creating new ideas in recreation, conservation, and tourism, and tying cities, small communities, and municipalities together.

Almost all of that work is done by volunteers. The people who mow the corridors, resurface the limestone, clear downed trees after a storm, and staff the visitor centers are TrailKeepers, the name we give to everyone who gives time, money, or a voice to keep these trails open and free to use.

RTC is a volunteer-powered organization. It owns and manages trail corridors directly, holds the easements that keep them public, and coordinates 9 local chapters that carry out maintenance, fundraising, and community events. Together they care for more than 85 miles of rail-trail across 3 counties: Allegheny County, Fayette County, and Westmoreland County.

Each chapter is its own volunteer group with its own officers, its own maintenance schedule, and its own events. The Steel Valley Trail Council meets Wednesday mornings to clear trees and cut grass; the Westmoreland Yough Trail Chapter gathers the third Monday of each month in the West Newton visitor center; the Yough River Trail Council runs a campground and supply store in Connellsville. The work looks different in every town, which is exactly the point.



Editor’s Note –

It’s also worth checking out the website [GapTrail.org](https://www.gaptrail.org/) for a list of fun upcoming events!

Upcoming Events

Bonfires, Barrels & Brews

📅 October 25, 2026
📍 Mt. Pleasant

Sample a variety of delicious craft beers, wines, ciders, and spirits from Laurel Highlands Pour Tour makers while enjoying the cozy warmth of a bonfire, just a few miles off [...]

Mountain Maryland Film Festival

📅 November 6, 2026
📍 Cumberland

Plan an overnight trip to Cumberland for the Mountain Maryland Film Festival on November 6 and 7. This third annual festival will focus on a musical theme, featuring screenings of [...]

Connellsville Chili Walk

📅 November 7, 2026
📍 Connellsville

Bike or hike out to Connellsville for its annual Chili Walk, a delicious way to enjoy lunch on the Great Allegheny Passage on Saturday, November 1. Local businesses will be [...]

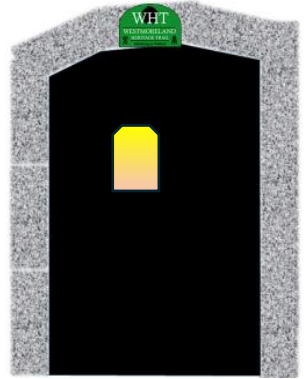
Tunnel Vision – Passing the Torch



Jeff Richards, our planning liaison with Westmoreland County Parks & Recreation Department, recently retired after a long and fruitful career. Jeff was involved with the development of the Westmoreland Heritage Trail from its earliest beginnings in the east to the recent negotiations with Norfolk-Southern Railways and Friends of the Riverfront in the west where we hope to connect through the Turtle Creek Connector to the GAP

trail. He worked diligently throughout his career to partner with stakeholders and ensure trail access for all of Westmoreland County's citizens. His final meeting with the trail chapter this summer was filled with commendations, plaques and letters of thanks from our municipal representatives.

This fall, Fred Kudrick took over for Jeff Richards as the Parks Planning Coordinator for Westmoreland County. Born and raised in Hunker, Fred graduated from the University of Pittsburgh at Johnstown with a degree in Engineering & Environmental Science and now lives in Greensburg. Fred harbors a deep passion for cycling and the natural geography of Westmoreland County. He has been cycling on County trails since he was a boy and worked as a bike technician and safety supervisor at the Wheel Mill (Pittsburgh's only indoor bike park) before its permanent closure in 2024. Fred is eager to apply his engineering experience, conservation-forward values, and love for the community to improving and expanding the Westmoreland Heritage Trail.



The mission of the Westmoreland Heritage Trail is to manage and maintain the trail from Saltsburg to Trafford, in partnership with like-minded groups, Westmoreland County Parks, and the associated municipalities the trail passes through. The trail will be promoted for walking and biking activities and for recreation, education, volunteerism, tourism, and historic and environmental conservation.

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Bald Eagle near the Westmoreland Heritage Trail.
Photo courtesy of Kathleen Sigg.



Thanks to Our 2026 Corporate Sponsors



Upcoming WHT Board Meetings

November 12, 2026 – Lamplighter

**Volunteer Appreciation Night
December 10, 2026 – WCD Barn**

January 14, 2027 – Zoom-only

Westmoreland Heritage Trail

P. O. Box 184

Claridge, PA 15623

Follow us on social media:

