

The Newsletter of

[www.avta-trails.org](http://www.avta-trails.org)

# The Allegheny Valley Trails Association 2023

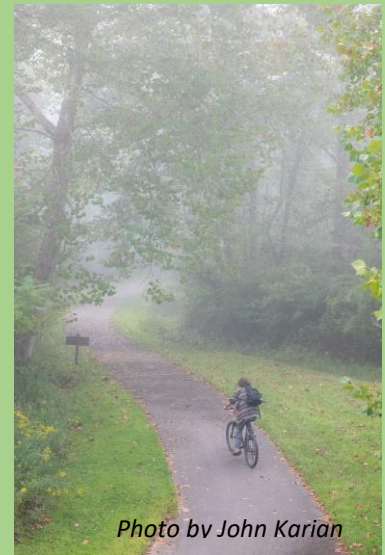


Photo by John Karian

## *From the President, Bill Weller*

Welcome 2023, let's hope this summer is dry and sunny. I would like to see a record number of trail users this year. In the past year we have been very busy. Last summer, we had plans of replacing the old wooden deck at the Salt Box. We removed the deck and found that the entire front of the structure had rotted away. Thanks to Kim Harris, of Oil Region Alliance for writing a grant to PNC Bank for repairs. Nick Reisinger of Reisinger's Renovations did all the repair work. He replaced the front sill plate and replaced all the downstairs windows with energy efficient new ones. AVTA replaced the deck with a new composite decking and enlarged it by two feet. Plans for this summer will be to paint the outside of the building.




This year the Salt Box will be open on Monday, Wednesday, and Friday from 1:00 PM to 4:00 PM, Saturdays from 11:00 AM to 5:00 PM, and Sundays from 12:00 noon to 4:00 PM, starting April 15<sup>th</sup>, weather permitting. We still need a couple of volunteers to fill a couple of two-hour spots. If this might interest you, please contact an AVTA board member, or stop by the Salt Box when we are open.

Last year, Matt Criado earned his Eagle Scout Award by replacing all the mile markers from Franklin to Emlenton. Nice job Matt!!!! Thank you for considering AVTA for your project.

On March 3<sup>rd</sup> of this year, we received a report of a large tree down in the St. George area. Two of our volunteers, Fred Switzer and Chris Smith went to clear the trail. Before they were done, about 8 to 10 residents of St. George were there to help. This kind of pride in our trail system is what makes AVTA shine. Thank you to all that helped that day!!!!

Bill Martz of Martz Excavating was hired this spring to clean ditches along the Sandy Creek Trail. He spent about a week cleaning from Rockland Road to Van. Over the last several years Bill has been very helpful in trail maintenance. Thanks Bill!

This year we want to welcome two new board members, Cindy Schenck and Nick Reisinger. Cindy will be taking over chair of our Safety Patrol. With deep regret we are losing Steve Schenck. Steve was instrumental in organizing the Safety Patrol, took charge of the spring clean-up, always swept the trail with the skid steer, helped with the AVTA web site and so much more. Steve was the first recipient of the Jim Holden Memorial Award. Steve will be greatly missed. THANK YOU, Steve!!!

Like us on 

Allegheny Valley Trails Association

[www.avta-trails.org](http://www.avta-trails.org)

We started a new program this winter. We went to Sugarcreek Borough and the City of Franklin Police Dept. to ask if they would donate their un-claimed bicycles to AVTA. They agreed, and since the first of the year AVTA has re-furbished over 20 bicycles that we are donating to children through Children and Youth of Venango County. Many thanks to Jim at 4 Seasons Bike Shop in Franklin for helping with this project.



*Just a few of the  
refurbished bicycles  
that received a new  
life.*



Last but not least, AVTA would like to thank all of the unknown volunteers that seem to cut up trees, cut back brush and watch over our trail. You do this out of love for helping us maintain this great trail system and you do this without any recognition. So, we want to express our gratitude and thanks to all of you, THANK YOU VERY MUCH!!!!!!

## The AVTA Endowment Fund

AVTA has an endowment with the purpose of establishing a fund sufficient to maintain our trail system. Grants are available to construct trails, but seldom to maintain them. This will require a principal amount in excess of one million dollars to yield interest of \$75,000/ year. AVTA has partnered with the Venango Area Community Foundation, an affiliate of the multi-county Bridge Builders Community Foundation to manage the Foundation and AVTA now has an active Endowment Committee.

- Make a memorial donation in memory of a loved one. What better honor than to donate to a healthy lifestyle in our area!
- Estate Planning is another important key to developing a significant fund.
- As your finishing up your 2021 taxes, consider planning a donation to our 501(C)3 in 2022.

If you have questions about gifts of any size, please contact Trenton Moulin at (814) 677-8687 or [trenton@bbcf.org](mailto:trenton@bbcf.org)



# AVTA & The Great American Cleanup

**Saturday  
April 22**

The Allegheny Valley Trails Association is participating in the 2023 Great American Cleanup of PA with a trail clean up on Saturday, April 22<sup>nd</sup>, Earth Day. Clean up starts at 9:00 am at the Trailhead. The cleanup should be finished soon after noon. Trash bags and some gloves and safety vests will be provided by PENNDOT. Bring along pruning shears if you can and you may want your favorite work gloves. You can work down one side of the trail for about an hour and a half, then work your way back on the other side

Be prepared to:

Pick up trash. Carry out what you can. Leave remainder beside trail for later pickup. Report sections where pick up is required and any problems you see with the trail, i.e., trees down, logs on the edge of the trail, plugged drains.

Clear the edge of the trail back 6-8 feet of stones, branches and anything that would damage a mower while trimming the edge. Trim branches up 2-3 feet from the ground and back 6-8 feet, where practical, for mower clearance. Trim branches back from the trail far enough that you won't hit them when riding on the edge of the trail and clear overhead, so you don't need to duck. Trimmed branches should be thrown at least 10 feet off the trail.

If you can help, please contact Cindy Schenck at [cschenck3@verizon.net](mailto:cschenck3@verizon.net).



KEEP AMERICA  
BEAUTIFUL

## ***E-Bikes***

Pennsylvania General Assembly definition of E-Bikes – “Pedalcycle” with electric assist. A vehicle weighing not more than 100 lbs with 2 or 3 wheels more than 11” in diameter; manufactured or assembled with an electric motor system rated at not more than 750 watts and equipped with operable pedals an capable of a speed not more than 20 mph on a level surface when powered by the motor source only.

E-bikes which comply with the Pennsylvania General Assembly definition (which is very similar to the national definition) are allowed on the AVTA trails. Maximum speed is 20 mph. Be courteous, when approaching from behind, slow down and announce that you are passing. When approaching from the front, slow down.



## Trail Safety Patrol

The Safety Patrol carries tools and patches for minor bike repairs, some first aid supplies and water and maybe an energy bar. Members can walk, run, ride a bike or sit on a bench. They provide an official presence on the trail and can provide trail and local information. They are not there to 'police' the trail but may remind someone that dogs are to be leashed and ATVs aren't to be on the trail. Some members carry pruning shears or a saw to cut back brush and limbs encroaching on the trail and they report problems they see along the trail. The Patrollers have yellow vests to wear with AVTA Safety Patrol on the back. The patrol numbers have dwindled over the years to just a few.

If you are interested in joining the Safety Patrol, contact Cindy Schenck at [cschenck3@verizon.net](mailto:cschenck3@verizon.net)

We have included a letter from the Amazon Smile website.



*Dear Customer,  
In 2013, we launched AmazonSmile to make it easier for customers to support their favorite charities. However, after almost a decade, the program has not grown to create the impact that we had originally hoped. With so many eligible organizations- more than 1 million globally- our ability to have an impact was often spread too thin.  
We are writing to let you know that we plan to wind down AmazonSmile by February 20, 2023.*

For those who have used this platform to support AVTA, we thank you. Continue reading for other ways to support your local trails.

# Annual Membership Meeting

**Wednesday, May 3, 2022**

**Social Time 5:30 PM – 6:00 PM**

**6:00 PM Dinner**

*at the*



**422 12<sup>th</sup> Street, Franklin**

**\$20 includes**

**flatbreads, pretzels and salad**

**Cash bar for non-alcoholic drinks as well as the locally made craft beers and other alcoholic beverages**

**Reservations due by April 27**

**Contact Karen at**

**[kcounselman510@verizon.net](mailto:kcounselman510@verizon.net) or (814) 673-2286**

Don't forget...  
Trails to Ales honors the work of Jim Holden and AVTA by donating 5% of the total sales of our flagship beer, Holden's Dream directly to AVTA.



## OFFICERS FOR 2022-2023

President: Bill Weller  
Vice President: Matt Lehman  
Secretary: Karen Counselman  
Treasurer: Judy Hamminen

## BOARD OF DIRECTORS FOR 2022-2023

Caryl Holden	Paul Kentzel	David Przbylek	Steve Cole
John Sims	Larry Puleo	Maryann Porterfield	Nick Reisinger
Cindy Schenck			



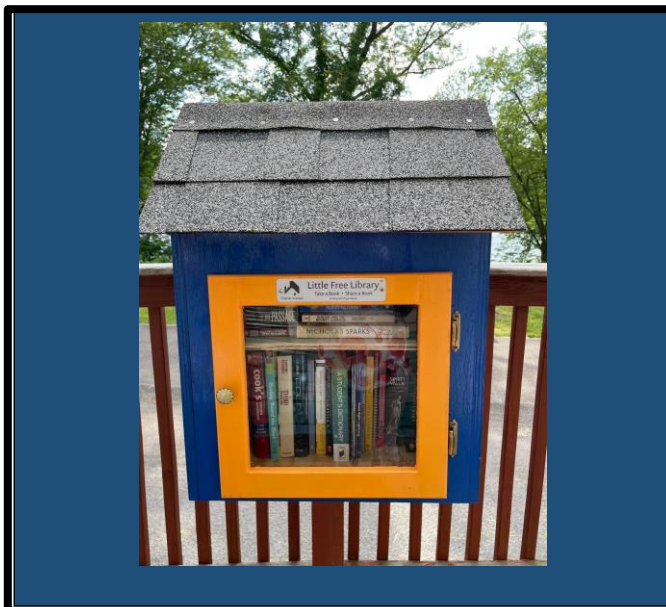
### Looking for ways to help on the trails?

AVTA relies on volunteers to keep the trails safe, clean and beautiful.

Have you considered how you could help the all-volunteer trail association? Here are a few ways we could use your help:

- Become a member. Fill out the membership form in this newsletter or on our website
- Volunteer at the Saltbox Visitor Center
- Become part of the Trail Patrol
- Assist with trail maintenance
- Work in the Applefest Booth
- Become a business partner

Allegheny Valley Trails Association started in 1991 with only three members. It has grown steadily to 190 memberships and a board of directors of 15. The board has remained the same and, as you can imagine have become quite advanced in age. AVTA is very concerned about its succession plan. We as the AVTA Board, wonder what AVTA will look like in the next 5, 10 or 15 years. Will there be someone to continue maintenance on the trail? Who will keep the grass mowed? Will litter be collected? Will AVTA no longer exist? If you have an interest in our local trails or know someone who is, we would welcome their application to the AVTA. You can contact Board President, Bill Weller at [wweller@zoominternet.net](mailto:wweller@zoominternet.net), Vice President, Matt Lehman at [lehmanmh2@gmail.com](mailto:lehmanmh2@gmail.com) AVTA Secretary Karen Counselman at [kcounselman510@verizon.net](mailto:kcounselman510@verizon.net). If our words haven't convinced you, check out our website [www.avta-trails.org](http://www.avta-trails.org) and let our pictures do the talking!



### Trailhead Addition

While at the trailhead you will see a new addition on the Salt Box House deck. A "Little Free Library Box" was provided and is maintained by the Franklin Rotary Club. Books for all ages are available for free!

A special Thank You goes out to project partners; the AVTA leadership and Cranberry Township maintenance staff for the installation of this trailhead addition.

*By: Deb Eckelberger, Franklin Rotary Club*

## THE ALLEGHENY RIVER TRAIL - TWO PROJECTS UNDERWAY

By Kim Harris, Outdoor Recreation Program Manager for the Oil Region Alliance



The 2,868-foot Rockland Tunnel, completed in 1916, has continued to have ice buildup due to the cold winds and water dripping through the tunnel liner during the cold Pennsylvania winter. This process of freezing and thawing over many years has caused the brick liner to deteriorate. Through the help of Steffey Trail Connections, it was determined that to stop the freeze and thaw process happening in the tunnel, some type of barrier to stop the wind from gushing through the tunnel would preserve the tunnel from further rapid

deterioration. It has been determined by engineering services that the best method suitable and cost-effective for the Rockland Tunnel was to construct an overhead door system with a pedestrian door for all-year-round access for trail users. The garage door can also be opened in the event there is a need to gain access to the trail by emergency vehicles. The engineer contracted was also asked to design ADA parking at the tunnel's northern portal and a safety barrier for cyclists over Shull Run, just north of the Rockland Tunnel.

Funding to implement the project is nearly secured. Engineering and implementation for the project are funded with a grant from the Community Conservation Partnerships Program, using Environmental Stewardship Funds under the administration of the PA DCNR, Bureau of Recreation and Conservation, and the Growing Greener Program under the administration of DEP through the Northwest Greenways Block Grant Program. Additional funding and support were secured through the PNC Charitable Trust, Bridge Builders Community Foundation, Oil Region Alliance, Erie to Pittsburgh Trail Alliance, and volunteers through the Allegheny Valley Trails Association and local communities

The Ritchey Run Connector is the second project. It is nearing the completion of the engineering phase, which entails rehabilitating the Ritchey Run Bridge (a huge culvert) on the rail corridor in Emlenton adjacent to the Clarion County border and constructing a trail from the eastern end of River Avenue to the Ritchey Run Bridge. This connector has a 20-foot elevation difference that the engineering firm has been working on to design to meet ADA standards but stay within the limits of the controlled property. We look forward to the implementation phase of this project beginning in 2023.

Funding for this project is provided by a PA DCNR Community Conservation Partnerships Program, using Recreational Trails Program, a Greenways, Trails, and Recreation grant through the PA DCED, Dr. and Mrs. Arthur William Phillips Charitable Trust, and the Oil Region Alliance.

Additional partners on these projects include the Erie to Pittsburgh Trail Alliance through their technical support of the services of Steffey Trail Connections, the Oil Region Alliance for project administration and management on both projects and the Allegheny River Trail in Clarion County for support of the DCED funding for the Ritchey Run Connector project.

## Annual Greenways Awards To Be Presented on May 31, 2023



The public is invited to attend a free outdoor ceremony for the Annual Greenways Awards on Wednesday afternoon, May 31, at the Franklin Trailhead of the Justus Trail/Allegheny River Trail just off Route 322 immediately downstream of the 8<sup>th</sup> Street Bridge over the Allegheny River. In addition to hearing about and meeting this year's award recipients, participants are welcome to tour the Saltbox House Visitor Center which is operated by volunteers from AVTA.

Since 2013, the Council on Greenways and Trails (CGT) has recognized individuals, families, organizations, businesses, and municipalities for outstanding support they provided to CGT and its member entities in the preceding five-year period. The James E. Holden Greenways Volunteer of the Year Award honors uncompensated activities and projects. The Thomas J. Allen Greenways Partner of the Year Award addresses fellow organizations which pool their monetary, recreational, and human resources to advance the development, promotion, and maintenance of trails and greenways. Property owners (including couples, clubs, groups of employees, and municipalities situated along trails) who help welcome outdoor recreational enthusiasts are highlighted with the Richard J. Garrard Greenways Neighbor of the Year Award.

Sponsorships of the Greenways Awards confirmed when this newsletter went to print include the Titusville Community Development Agencies, the Holden Family, Franklin Industrial and Commercial Development Authority, and Eat'N Park Hospitality Group.

This gathering also celebrates the 15<sup>th</sup> anniversary of CGT, formed in 2008 as a non-profit corporation, to advocate for continued enhancements and maintenance of outdoor recreational facilities, venues, and activities in Clarion, Crawford, and Venango Counties. Its motto is "Recognizing the worth of natural, heritage and recreational resources....Planning now, enjoying forever."

Guests are encouraged to bring their own lawn chairs to the ceremony which will begin at 2 p.m. If the weather is bad, the event will take place inside the recently upgraded Saltbox House Visitor Center. No RSVP is necessary. Light refreshments will be available before and after the ceremony.

For more information about the mission, projects, and public events of the Council on Greenways and Trails, please see [www.nwpagegreenways.org](http://www.nwpagegreenways.org).

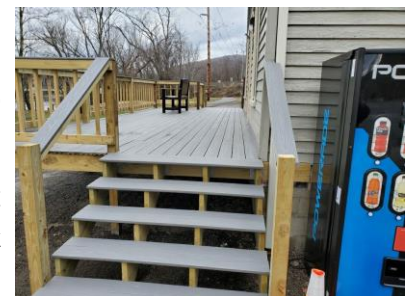


### Much Needed Updates to the Saltbox House

A special thank you to Kim Harris of the Oil Region Alliance for writing a grant to PNC Bank to fund the needed repairs. Also, thank you to Nick Reisinger of Reisinger's Renovations and the volunteers of AVTA who completed the repairs and renovations.

The Saltbox is open Monday, Wednesday, and Friday from 1:00 PM to 4:00 PM, Saturdays from 11:00 AM to 5:00 PM, and Sundays from 12:00 noon to 4:00 PM.

Be sure to stop in!



## AVTA Membership – We NEED You!

Many of the people we see out using the trails on a regular basis are local people who simply don't know how the trails appeared there. We need to spread the word that we need the support of people in Venango County. Please help us by talking to trail users about joining AVTA.

Membership in the Allegheny Valley Trails Association is an easy way for trail users and supporters to help the organization maintain and develop the trail. Folks can become members as an individual or family membership or opt to one of the higher categories. Membership offers access to the annual meeting, this newsletter and receipt of the minutes of the board's bi-monthly meetings. It's a benefit to both AVTA and its members who learn about activities and efforts of the organization.

We believe that many more trail users and supporters are out there. If you know of someone who is a trail user and believer, invite them to become a member. Check out the membership options at our website or cut out the membership form below and send it with your check to AVTA, P. O. Box 264 Franklin, PA 16323. Annual dues are payable now as well. THANK YOU ALL!

**TIME to RENEW your AVTA MEMBERSHIP. You can do it at the Member's Meeting, online or by mailing your check to AVTA at P.O. Box 264 Franklin, PA 16323. Check out the details on our website at [www.avta-trails.org](http://www.avta-trails.org)**

Membership Registration Form  
Allegheny Valley Trails Association  
P.O. Box 264 Franklin, PA 16323

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_ City, State, Zip: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone: \_\_\_\_\_ Email: \_\_\_\_\_

Select Membership category:

\_\_\_\_ Individual \$20 \_\_\_\_ Family \$25 \_\_\_\_ Advocate \$50 \_\_\_\_ Benefactor \$100 \_\_\_\_ Lifetime \$1,000

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**Allegheny Valley Trail Association**  
**P.O. Box 264**  
**Franklin, PA 16323**