

Commissoners

Old PA Pike Trail Updated

By Cassidy Pittman
STAFF WRITER

Tuesday morning John Carlin, Anthony D'Anna, and Craig Bachik met with Fulton County commissioners Larry R. Lynch, Stuart L. Ulah and Rodney McCray to discuss the restoration updates on the Old PA Pike Trail for hikers and bikers.

Both the commissioners and chairmen of the trail awarded the bid for the upcoming restoration to Navarro & Wright, who will be updating the 2006 Gannett Fleming Master Plan and Adaptive Re-Use Study. The plans include several trailhead options in both Bedford and Fulton counties, public restrooms, tunnel art images, trail signage and wayfinding signage.

Since the project kicked off, it has caught the attention of several important people and entities, including PennDOT Secretary Leslie Richards and DCNR Secretary Cindy Dunn. The two officials were here last October along with others from their offices to bike their way through the old PA Pike Trail.

Alongside the two state cabinet secretaries, the hosts of the End of the Road Marathon and Half Marathon have been drawn to the old PA tunnels. The End of the Road Marathon will be hosted on October 29 and will be 26.2 miles long. So far 336 runners have signed up for the one-of-a-kind event. The goal of the marathon's location is to give the runners a glimpse of what it would be like to run through a post-apocalyptic world. Runners are encouraged to bring headlights



This photo was taken at the Sideling Hill Tunnel shortly after the area was cleared by the Old PA Pike Trail Committee.

for the tunnel portion of the race. And though there will be post-apocalyptic themes, the race will be managed by a professional staff at all times. Many other votes of confidence have been sent in from organizations all over, not just the two counties but the entire state.

County commissioners were upbeat about the positive response the trail's open house accrued last Saturday and have agreed to a joint meeting with Bedford County commissioners at the end of the month to further discuss the future economic possibilities in restoring the old trail.

A joint authority is hoped to be achieved between the counties in order to assist in the many responsibilities of operation that such a development would require.

The trail, stretching between the two counties, is 8 1/2 miles long and includes 2 miles of mountain tunnels, which were built for the railroad that never came back in the 1870s. In 1940 the land was purchased by the Pennsylvania Turnpike, and was then used for a roadway until 1968, when it was abandoned. Once through the tunnels on the Breezewood side, there are over 60 more clear trails to explore.

In 2001 the PA Turnpike then sold the 8 1/2 mile stretch to a nonprofit called Southern Alleghenies Conservancy for a mere \$1. SAC had plans to revitalize then, but was turned down for a budget by the state. Since then, the tunnels have been visited by many wanderers, both foreign

and local. In fact, in 2014 Fourth Consulting in Pittsburgh did an Economic Impact Analysis of the trail, and found that if the trail was updated to its best state, it would potentially draw in 200,000 trail users each year.

In recent years the original committee, Pike2Bike, was renamed The Old PA Pike Trail, and has received a shot of life from its very active chairmen. It is the hope of the committee that many programs will stem from the hiking and biking trail revitalization, and open up an ecotourism flow for the two counties. These may include forgotten history, environmental protection, engineering and restoration programs.

Fulton County commissioners and the Pike Trail chairmen mutually agree that though the restoration is important, it also is pertinent that the taxpayers of the counties are not responsible for the cost of such a large undertaking.

Since this project would affect both counties' citizens, the Old PA Pike Trail Committee is urging everyone to visit the new Web site www.theoldpapike.com to complete surveys. This will assist in gathering vital information in what the community would like to have provided on the trail such as amenities, education programs and outdoor events.

In between the tunnels, the committee hopes to lease space to food trucks for hungry hikers and bikers. Other activi-

PIKE, Page A2

DEATHS

- Bart, Lois J., 85, Rapid City, S.D.
Burkholder, Theresa A., 69, Spring Run
Harding, Walter, 76, Warfordsburg
Helman, Alan, 59, Harrisonville
Johnson, Carson Jr., 71, Hancock
Lambert, Ralph E., 89, Warfordsburg
Lynch, Cindy L., 58, McConnellsburg
MacDonald, Jane C., 89, McConnellsburg
Ritz, John E., 82, Murrysville, Pa.

OBITUARIES, Page B3



PIKE

From Page One

ties, like mural contests and live music concerts, will also be welcome. Small issues, such as lim-

ited cell service in the tunnels, are still being worked out. Any suggestions for improving the tunnel are welcome and can be submitted to their Web site.

During the Fulton Fall Folk Festival the Old PA Pike Trail

will have an information booth set up for anyone interested in wanting to know more about the project's volunteer options and its many possibilities. Location of the booth will be released at a later time.