

# Applying for National Recreational Trails Status for the Erie to Pittsburgh Trail and the individual trails that make up the route.

## Report to Erie to Pittsburgh Trail Alliance Board

**Mary Shaw**

January 18, 2014

Background on National Recreational Trails (NRTs) from the website, <http://www.americantrails.org/>

*National Recreation Trails may be designated by both the Secretary of Interior and the Secretary of Agriculture to recognize exemplary trails of many kinds. Through designation, these trails are recognized as part of America's national system of trails.*

*National Recreation Trail designation is an honor given to existing trails that have been nominated and meet the requirements for connecting people to local resources and improving their quality of life.*

*The National Recreation Trails Program supports designated NRT's with an array of benefits, including promotion, technical assistance, networking and access to funding. Its goal is to promote the use and care of existing trails and stimulate the development of new trails to create a national network of trails and realize the vision of "Trails for All Americans."*

Applications are accepted each year, with a deadline of November 1. As far as I can tell, all our trails are eligible, except portions suitable for passenger car travel (e.g., Seaway Trail). Criteria for designation include that the trail is open to public use, it's built and maintained according to best practices, it's in compliance with applicable laws, it will be open for 10 years, and the designation is supported by landowners.

The plan is to seek National Recreational Trail designation for the Erie to Pittsburgh Trail as a whole and for any individual trails whose organizations would like to apply. By coordinating the applications we can improve consistency and save effort.

The Armstrong and Redbank Valley Trails have already expressed interest in participating/ The current committee for preparing applications is Mary Shaw, Ron Steffey, and Sandy Mateer.

This report summarizes the opportunity, lays out the application task, and identifies possible issues.

*Action for the board:* Approve going forward with the application, specifically the three items listed under "Next Steps" below.

## Candidate Trails

These are the trails that make up the Erie to Pittsburgh Trail, plus spur trails and other affiliated trails. Six are already designated as NRTs. The Great Allegheny Passage and the Pittsburgh to Harrisburg Main Line Canal Greenway (“Doubleburger”) both have NRT designation for both the entire trail and several of the constituent trails. This is a good model (and precedent!) for the Erie to Pittsburgh Trail.

Trail	Already a NRT?	Managing Organization
<b>Erie to Pittsburgh Trail mainline (from north to south)</b>		
Karl Boyes Multipurpose Trail (partly on road)	yes	Presque Isle State Park
Great Lakes Seaway Trail (on road)	?	PennDOT, seawaytrail.com (3 NRT DB entries from 2002/03/12, no actual info except conflicting distances)
Bayfront Parkway Multi-use Trail		Erie Western PA Port Authority
Chautauqua Rails to Trails		Chautauqua Rails to Trails, Inc.
Corry Junction Greenway		Northwest PA Trails Association
East Branch Trail		Clear Lake Authority
Titusville Queen City Trail		Titusville Area Trails Association
Oil Creek State Park Multi-Use Trail	yes	Oil Creek State Park (PA DCNR)
McClintock Trail		Oil Region Alliance of Business, Industry & Tourism (w/ Cornplanter Twp.)
Samuel Justus Trail	yes	Allegheny Valley Trails Association (w/ Oil City)
Allegheny River Trail	yes	Allegheny Valley Trails Association
Armstrong Trail		Armstrong Rails to Trails Association
Three Rivers Heritage Trail	yes	Friends of the Riverfront
<b>Connecting Trails associated with Erie to Pittsburgh Trail Alliance</b>		
Sandy Creek Trail	yes	Allegheny Valley Trails Association
Redbank Valley Trail		Redbank Valley Trails Association
<b>Other trails affiliated with Erie to Pittsburgh Trail Alliance</b>		
Trout Island Trail		Mercer County Trails Association
Shenango River Trail		Mercer County Trails Association
Frontier Park Multi-use Trail		Lake Erie Arboretum at Frontier Park

## Next Steps

1. Contact Peggy Pings for advice on how to proceed with multiple nominations. Mary to make the contact. Specific questions to ask include
  - a. Should we submit separate applications or one coordinated application
  - b. Can the trail manager provide owner consent or do we have to check for all easements, government agencies, etc?
  - c. How do we handle gaps in the trail, especially the Erie-Pittsburgh gaps between established trails where the future alignment is uncertain?
2. Contact trail managing organizations to invite them to participate with applications of their own. This message should be sent by EPTA (presumably Kim, as Secretary); here is draft text

The Erie to Pittsburgh Trail Alliance is looking into applying for National Recreational Trail status for the entire Erie to Pittsburgh Trail. Other long-distance trails have received National Recreational Trail designations for individual segments or member trails as well as for the trail as a whole

National Recreation Trail designation is an honor given to existing trails that have been nominated and meet the requirements for connecting people to local resources and improving their quality of life. The National Recreation Trails Program supports designated NRT's with an array of benefits, including promotion, technical assistance, networking and access to funding. Its goal is to promote the use and care of existing trails and stimulate the development of new trails to create a national network of trails and realize the vision of "Trails for All Americans." More information is available at <http://www.americantrails.org/nationalrecreationtrails/about.htm>.

The EPTA board would like to encourage the member trails to apply for National Recreational Trail designation. If you would like to join our shared application preparation effort, please contact [[Kim? Mary?]] by the end of February with [[trail name and the person who will be responsible for preparing this trail's application]].

3. Start collecting information for the application. The application form itself requires registration; a checklist of the information required is at <http://www.americantrails.org/nationalrecreationtrails/previewapp.html> and a printout of that page is attached (ignore the slight duplication across page breaks). Responsible person for each trail should do the data collection and report back at next meeting on any problems.

Most of the material is simple data (name, location, surface, allowed uses, surface, etc) or narrative (short description, longer (5-800 word) description. Some might be a bit tedious (e.g., cities/townships crossed by the trail). The few bits that don't look pretty straightforward are

- a. average/max gradient and cross-slope
- b. owner consent ("All public and private property owners of trail lands or waters must give written consent to this application. (\*Not required if the applicant is the sole owner of the property).")
- c. additional supporting materials (figuring out how much more to supply)