

January 2020 Redbank Valley Trails Association EPTA Report

301 Broad Street, New Bethlehem, PA 16242

www.redbankvalleytrails.org

Redbank Valley Trails is a 51-mile trail, with 17 bridges, 2 tunnels and a less than 1% grade, running along Red Bank Creek and SR 28. It connects at the Allegheny River with the Armstrong Trail. It continues through Southern Clarion County and Climax, New Bethlehem, Hawthorn and Summerville to Brookville in Jefferson Co. There is a 9-mile Spur with a 3% grade along Wildcat Run that is great for cross country skiing from within a mile of Sligo in central Clarion downhill to Lawsonham at mile 6 of the main trail.

This report is a review of 2019.

RVTA was within a few weeks of celebrating trail surface improvements on all 51 miles after 9 years of dedicated volunteer work when a July 19, 2019, flash flood cut a 40-foot gap in the trail at Long Run. The flash flood destroyed an 1871 stone arch at mile 19, 1 mile west of New Bethlehem and 2 miles east of Climax Tunnel. The Climax Tunnel was the first of DCNR's top ten trail gaps to be completed in August 2018 and now we have a new gap that is not passable without having to cross a rocky stream. A road bypass was established after local roads and bridges were repaired, but trail users did not like it because of its narrow, rough terrain on local roads. A temporary bypass was created, but that was washed out by the Halloween storm. We continue to meet with engineers and contractors to try to find a solution which will most likely be an 80 foot bridge.



Before the disaster:

- ❖ A covered bridge was added at Mortimer Run (mile 1.02).
- ❖ A kayak launch was added in cooperation with Brookville Borough and the Western PA Conservancy Canoe Access Fund adjacent to the Depot Street trailhead.
- ❖ Stream and mile markers were added along 51 miles of trail.
- ❖ Our tractor was out of service for several months while waiting for a part which delayed mowing and other work.
- ❖ A new B&B opened in South Bethlehem, a new bakery opened in New Bethlehem and Zack's Restaurant reported that 40% of its weekend business comes from trail users.



Since the disaster:

- ❖ Surfacing was completed at mile 21-22 following completion of DEP mine reclamation work.
- ❖ The grade of ramps at Middle Run Road was lowered.
- ❖ The 9-mile Sligo Spur was completed as far as initial grading, ditching and surfacing.
- ❖ Metal sculptures of "Mama Bear and 2 Cubs" by artist Dale Rogers were added in New Bethlehem in the old freight yard off of Route 66/Wood Street.
- ❖ 2 more historic markers were added near New Bethlehem.
- ❖ Mowing, ditching, cutting up fallen trees and general maintenance continued.
- ❖ A guest house opened in Ringgold promoting the trail and area events.
- ❖ Fundraising, professional consulting and repair efforts to close the mile 19 gap are progressing.

