

# NWPA's (untitled) Greenways E-Magazine

## NAME THE E-ZINE CONTEST!

Help us find the perfect name for this new publication. Deadline is July 23rd, top choices will be announced in the August issue. Readers will then vote on their favorite, and the new name & winner will be revealed in the Sept. issue. Winner receives a \$25 gas card.

 We welcome your input!

Please contribute to our region's new monthly e-zine. Share your images, story ideas, event schedules & info. email: [stephen@westpamag.com](mailto:stephen@westpamag.com)

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by Nature Photographer Dave Bowser

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A group of kayakers on the Shenango River near Pymatuning State Park, Crawford County. Photo ~ Mike Henderson

**Letter from the Editors:** Welcome to the premier issue of NWPA's monthly e-zine, edited and distributed by Stephen & Beth West, publishers of *West PA Magazine* in Franklin, Venango County.

Our vast region offers endless natural wonders, recreational opportunities and heritage treasures, allowing us to take readers on adventures through stories and images.

Coverage area includes eight NWPA counties: Clarion, Crawford, Erie, Forest, Lawrence, Mercer, Venango and Warren; plus additional communities along the Erie to Pittsburgh Trail.

May your journeys through NWPA be epic!



✓ This monthly electronic E-magazine was produced with financial assistance by the PA Dept. of Conservation and Natural Resources, Bureau of Recreation and Conservation via Greenways Block Grant Program grant to the County of Venango, awarded by the Northwest PA Regional Planning and Development Commission. Additional funds were provided by the Oil Region Alliance of Business, Industry and Tourism, the Erie to Pittsburgh Trail Alliance, and the Council on Greenways and Trails. Opinions and information expressed in this E-magazine are not necessarily those of the County of Venango, DCNR, ORA, EPTA, the Northwest Commission, or CGT.



Story & photos  
by Debra Frawley

*Recognizing the worth of natural, heritage and recreational resources . . . planning now, enjoying forever.*

**Did you know** that in northwest PA there is a system of trails, public lands and properties protected with conservation easements that are attracting new businesses, new homeowners, improving the health of citizens and bringing in millions of dollars?

Within Venango, Clarion and Crawford Counties alone there are over 88 miles of multi-use trails for bicycling, walking and more. Some of these individual trails are joining the mega-greenway called the Erie to Pittsburgh Trail, connecting Lake Erie to the Point in Pittsburgh.

There are also hundreds of miles of hiking trails, mountain biking trails, equestrian trails and water trails. NWPA has diverse state parks and numerous wonderful county parks, plus extensive state forests, game lands and wildlife refuges.



*The Emlenton Trail awaits, leading travelers to quiet, natural settings and into several Trail Towns.*

The trail systems are also being connected to many of the towns and cities, drawing tourists into our business districts and boosting local economies. A study of this central portion of the Erie to Pittsburgh Trail system in 2013 concluded that over 158,000 visitors per year are enjoying the trailways and bringing \$6.9 million in economic impact to the tri-county area. Additionally, countless outdoor enthusiasts come to canoe & kayak, fish, hike, camp and experience parks in many other ways. To fully benefit from these assets, many communities and businesses are embracing the Trail Town concept by providing goods and services, thereby becoming "trail friendly."

The essential key to success is the collaboration among trail builders, marketing experts, economic development professionals, municipalities and outdoor recreation visitors arriving from across America and the agencies that provide models, policies, regulations and funding coordination.

The Council on Greenways and Trails (CGT) is a coalition of fourteen such organizations, which have united to collaborate on these projects from a regional perspective. They employ me, Debra Frawley, as the Greenways Coordinator to be the central point of contact, providing technical assistance for projects and coordinating those related components. The purpose of the Greenways Coordinator is to integrate efforts across the multiple jurisdictions which individually lack the financial resources to hire a professional staff person. These cooperative efforts result in a greater availability of facilities and programs than could be achieved by the participants on their own.



*The Allegheny Valley Conservancy constructed a scenic overlook and educational interpretive panels along the Allegheny River Trail near Emlenton, describing the streambank stabilization project (see below) and the habitats and uses of the river.*

*Constructing an Adirondack Shelter along the bike trail near Emlenton, beside Mill Creek. The endeavor was a partnership between the AVTA, AVC and Brandon Wurster's Eagle Scout project. There are five of these shelters along the AVT, and two others in Oil Creek State Park.*



Photo by Amy Wurster

Since the original partnership was formed in 2008, the CGT has been incorporated into a Pennsylvania non-profit organization, while growing in membership and territory. Each member group, including municipalities, other non-profits and municipal authorities, has a seat on the Board of Directors, which manages the CGT and supervises its Coordinator. All participating agencies help provide funding for the CGT's expenses, while also seeking grant funding for their own projects.

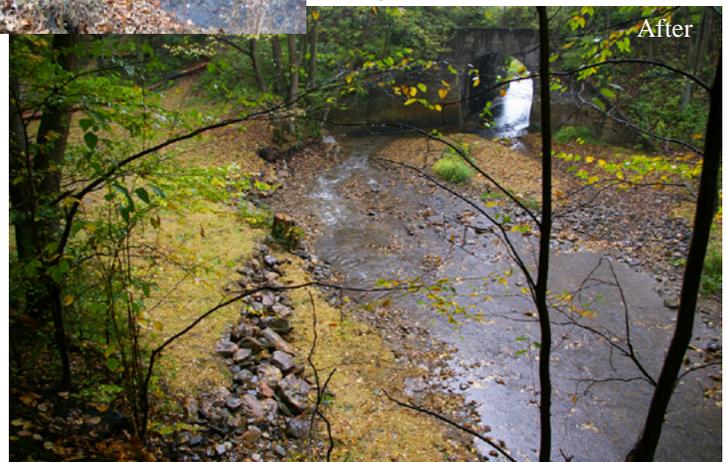
Initially, the Greenways work plan provided technical assistance for trail and conservation-related projects. Its mission has developed to include initiating regional efforts such as the Trail Town program, while helping to connect natural and recreational assets toward the revitalization efforts of the entire northwest PA region.

*For more info, contact:*

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217 Elm St., Oil City, PA 16301-1412  
(814) 677-3152 ext. 116 Fax: (814) 677-5206  
Email: [dfrawley@oilregion.org](mailto:dfrawley@oilregion.org)



*The AVC completed a streambank stabilization project near Mill Creek's confluence with the Allegheny River in southern Venango Co. The effort stopped the erosion of the bank, sedimentation into the waterways, and prevented damage to the trail.*



# The Journey of the Erie to Pittsburgh Trail



*The 1907 Belmar Trestle RR Bridge over the Allegheny River in Venango Co., at the geographical heart of the Erie to Pittsburgh Trail. The 50-foot-high iron crossing served the Jamestown, Franklin & Clearfield Railroad until abandonment in the 1980s, then gained new life as a vital part of the Allegheny Valley trails.*

*Photo by Tim Padalino*



*Photo by Mike Henderson*



In 2007, twelve trail building groups banded together to form the ambitious EPTA (Erie to Pittsburgh Trail Alliance), on a mission to connect the Erie Peninsula to The Point in Pittsburgh. Eventually, the 279-mile paved trail will be continuous, though at present, only 60% has been completed. The remainder is either under construction or on-road, with some undefined segments that are still being addressed.

The EPTA's mission is ongoing, and has been recognized as an important goal by state and federal funding agencies. The group is modeled after the ATA (Allegheny Trail Alliance), which has completed the very successful 150-mile GAP (Great Allegheny Passage) from Pittsburgh to Cumberland, MD. The GAP connects to the C&O Towpath, which features 185 miles of continuous trails to Washington, D.C.

## The Erie to Pittsburgh Trail is rich with Nature & Heritage throughout!

In the bitter winter of 1753-54, Major George Washington of the Virginia Militia undertook a dangerous diplomatic mission for VA Governor Dinwiddie & King George III of England, demanding that the French military cease their fort-building campaign and vacate the Ohio country. They declined, and the French & Indian War ensued (1754-63). Major Washington traveled from Cumberland, MD to Fort LeBoeuf, PA, mainly along the Venango Path ~ an ancient native route that took him through the future cities of Pittsburgh, Butler, Franklin, Meadville, Waterford and back again.



*Painting by Daniel Huntington*

On his return trip, Washington nearly died after falling into the Allegheny River from his hastily-constructed raft near present-day Pittsburgh. His faithful wingman, Christopher Gist, pulled him out of the icy waters, and the pair managed to start a campfire on a nearby island and survive the

night. Washington's colorful journal of his arduous two-month journey was published in a Maryland newspaper, then in book form, making him an international celebrity. The island that saved Washington's life became part of Allegheny Islands State Park in 1980, along with two nearby islands in northeast Allegheny County. The park is undeveloped, with no facilities and is accessible only by boat.



= Washington slept here

Trail Status	
	Open Paved
	Open Unpaved
	Share the Road
	Closed

## GeoCaching is catching on!



**GeoCaching** was invented in May 2000 as a fun way to hide objects in a container, then post the GPS (Global Positioning System) coordinates online, thus setting up a real-world treasure hunt. The idea caught on quickly, with millions of practitioners worldwide within a few years. The popularity of the activity in NWPA is evidenced by the Allegheny GeoTrail token (at left), which lists its network of ten counties. website: [alleghenygeotrail.com](http://alleghenygeotrail.com)

All that's needed to participate (besides a sense of adventure) is a GPS device or a GPS-enabled mobile phone, providing navigation to hidden caches.

The word **GeoCaching** refers to "Geo" for geography, and to "Caching" for the process of hiding a cache, but the term is also used in hiking/camping as a hiding place for concealing and preserving provisions.

*For more about GeoCaching, check out the website: [geocaching.com](http://geocaching.com)*

All aboard the GeoTrain! The classic Oil Creek & Titusville RR becomes the GeoTrain on August 16, during the annual geocaching event featuring adventure, history & more! Search for caches hidden in downtown Titusville, Crawford Co., until noon. Then board the OC&T tourist train at Perry Street Station, departing at 1 pm for Drake Well Museum, where lunch will be served. Learn new skills and locate special geocaches at

Drake Well, along the Queen City Trail, and even on the train itself!



Visit [www.GeoTrain.org](http://www.GeoTrain.org) or call (814) 676-1733 for reservations or details.

- + \$35 - Includes train ride, lunch, museum
- + \$25 - Drive-in (no train ride)
- + \$12 - 2014 GeoCoin
- + \$5 - per GeoDog
- + \$5 - per Bicycle on Train
- + \$7 - GeoBandana

*Advance registration required.*



**Don't miss out on the GeoFun  
In Titusville - August 15, 16 & 17**



*GeoCaching weekend starts Friday, August 15 with Hobo Bonfire at Perry Street Station (hobo fare and live music).*



*Story by co-owner Janet Shilling*

As outdoor enthusiasts, we were looking to start an outdoor related retirement business. When the Shenango River Watchers started opening up the river in our backyard, we immediately jumped on this opportunity. With the support of the Borough

of Greenville, the YMCA, and many other community members, *Carried Away Recreation* was born. We opened for business in the Spring of 2012, and operate from May thru September.

We're a family and friend business. My friend, Kim Leonard, and I are co-owners (both career nurses), and the manager is my son, Casey Shilling, a recreation professional.

Located in Greenville, Mercer County, we are a 20 minute drive from Pymatuning Reservoir, Shenango Reservoir, and Lake Wilhelm, with the Shenango River running right past us. Though 95% of our business is done on the river, we offer services on any of the named above, spanning from Mercer to Crawford Counties.

Currently, we rent bicycles on the Lake Wilhelm Bicycle Trail and Trout Run Bicycle Trail, both in Sharpsville, Mercer Co. We have plans of renting on the Rails-to-Trails now being developed along the Shenango River.

Greenville is on its way to becoming an official Trail Town. With the river already named a PA Water Trail, we've seen a very large influx of tourists to our town. With the completion of this multi-use trail (bicycle, walking, cross country skiing, etc), we predict that Greenville's outdoor-loving tourists will continue to grow exponentially. This will greatly help our community achieve our vision as "A Town for All Seasons!"

We greatly support the Shenango River Water GeoTrail, though our main involvement is providing rentals and a shuttle service for interested geo-cachers. This water trail is truly amazing.

The best part of the job has to be at the end of the day. Nothing feels better than watching your customers come in from their adventure, smiling from ear to ear, laughing and carrying on about how wonderful of a trip they just had. That, and working outdoors!

*Located inside Riverside Park on the Shenango River  
45 Alan Ave., Greenville, PA 16125  
(724) 343-1313*

*website: [carriedawayrecreation.com](http://carriedawayrecreation.com)  
email: [jeskayaks@gmail.com](mailto:jeskayaks@gmail.com)*



*LIFE is short: get carried away!*

### Sherman Lighthouse Tours



This unusual six-story structure along the Allegheny River in Tionesta, Forest Co. will be open for public tours 1-4 pm on Saturdays: **July 12, Aug. 9 & Oct. 11** Private tours available. Contact Jim McGuire: (814) 755-3672 [jrmcguire@verizon.net](mailto:jrmcguire@verizon.net)

## Afield & Afloat

**Trailblazer 5K & 15K** ~ Sun. July 13, 7:30 am  
Ernst Conservation Seed, Meadville, Crawford Co.

Trailway follows the 1892 Meadville-Linesville RR through the French Creek Valley. Located south of Meadville at 9006 Mercer Pike.

*Must register by July 10 at website: [ernsttrail.org](http://ernsttrail.org)*



➤ **Oil Heritage Festival** ➤  
Oil City, Venango Co.  
July 25-28, 2014

36th Annual OHF honoring the area's rich heritage and the Oil Boom that began along Oil Creek in 1859.

**Events include:** artisan fair, evening concerts Justus Park, fireworks, parades, car & motorcycle cruise-in, kids fun fair, and a raft race down the mighty Allegheny. And of course, lots of food, glorious food! Plus more.

Sponsored by the Venango Area Chamber of Commerce  
website: [venangochamber.org](http://venangochamber.org)  
(814) 676-8521

### Mercer Bicentennial Celebration & Old Fashioned Day in the Park

Bands, fireworks, classic car cruise-in, arts & crafts vendors, magic show, historic walking tours & picnic.

**Fri.-Sun. July 11-13** (724) 662-3980  
website: [mercerbicentennial.com](http://mercerbicentennial.com)

### Cook Forest State Park

Clarion County  
Sun. 1-3 pm  
**July 13 & 27**

Meet at the Fire Tower parking lot for an historical interpretive tour, with a breathtaking panoramic view of the vast woodlands from atop the Fire Tower. **Activities include hiking, history programs, wildlife watching, birding & walks.**

### Fire Tower Tours



For more info about PA state parks, visit the DCNR website: [dcnr.state.pa.us/stateparks](http://dcnr.state.pa.us/stateparks)

### 25th Annual Western PA Balloon Quest

**Thurs.-Sun. July 24 - 27**  
Scotland Meadows Park in New Castle, Lawrence Co.

Two dozen hot air balloons launch daily - 6 am & 6 pm;  
**Balloon Glow** Thurs. 9 pm.  
(724) 650-5252

website: [wpaballoonquest.com](http://wpaballoonquest.com)



### Discover Presque Isle!

**Fri.-Sun. July 25-27**

Presque Isle State Park ~ Erie, PA  
**Activities include art and craft vendors, sand sculpture competition, live music, childrens festival, giant bonfire on the beach, and athletic events all around Presque Isle State Park.**



### 21st Annual Pymatuning Pioneer & Arts Festival July 26-27

**Pymatuning State Park**  
Crawford Co.

Kayak presentation  
Boat rides free to the public  
Civil War encampment  
Children's activities  
Newfoundland Water Rescue Demonstration  
And More!

For more info, visit website:  
[pymatuningpioneerdays.com](http://pymatuningpioneerdays.com)

Please submit your upcoming events & schedules to [beth@westpamag.com](mailto:beth@westpamag.com) for publication in our August issue.



Photo by Alex Bellotti

For more info:  
(724) 981-5882 x111

website:  
[waterfiresharonpa.org](http://waterfiresharonpa.org)

Additional  
**Waterfire Sharon**  
events set for  
Aug. 23 & Sept. 27!

**WaterFire** is a world renowned, innovative, multi-sensory art event that was originally staged in Providence, RI in the mid-1990s. It was brought to Sharon, Mercer County in 2013. These public art performances bring people together in beautiful, open spaces to enjoy artistic programming.



**WATERFIRE SHARON**

**JULY 19, 2014**  
2-11 pm

**Daylong, free family-friendly events:** street performances, interactive artisans (chainsaw artist, glass blower, blacksmith, En Plein Air, and Wendell August Forge), children's activity area, watercolors class, and live music from 1-11 pm.



Along the Shenango River in downtown Sharon at dusk, fifty floating baskets of wood are set ablaze, followed by fire performers, fireworks & more!

**WaterFire Sharon** is a nonprofit arts fund of the Community Foundation of Western PA and Eastern OH, whose mission is to aid in the revitalization of the region and foster community engagement.

## Wildlife Families Abound in Oil Creek State Park

Featured Photographer ~ Dave Bowser

Situated between Oil City and Titusville in northeastern Venango County, **Oil Creek State Park** is 6,250 acres of woodlands and heritage.

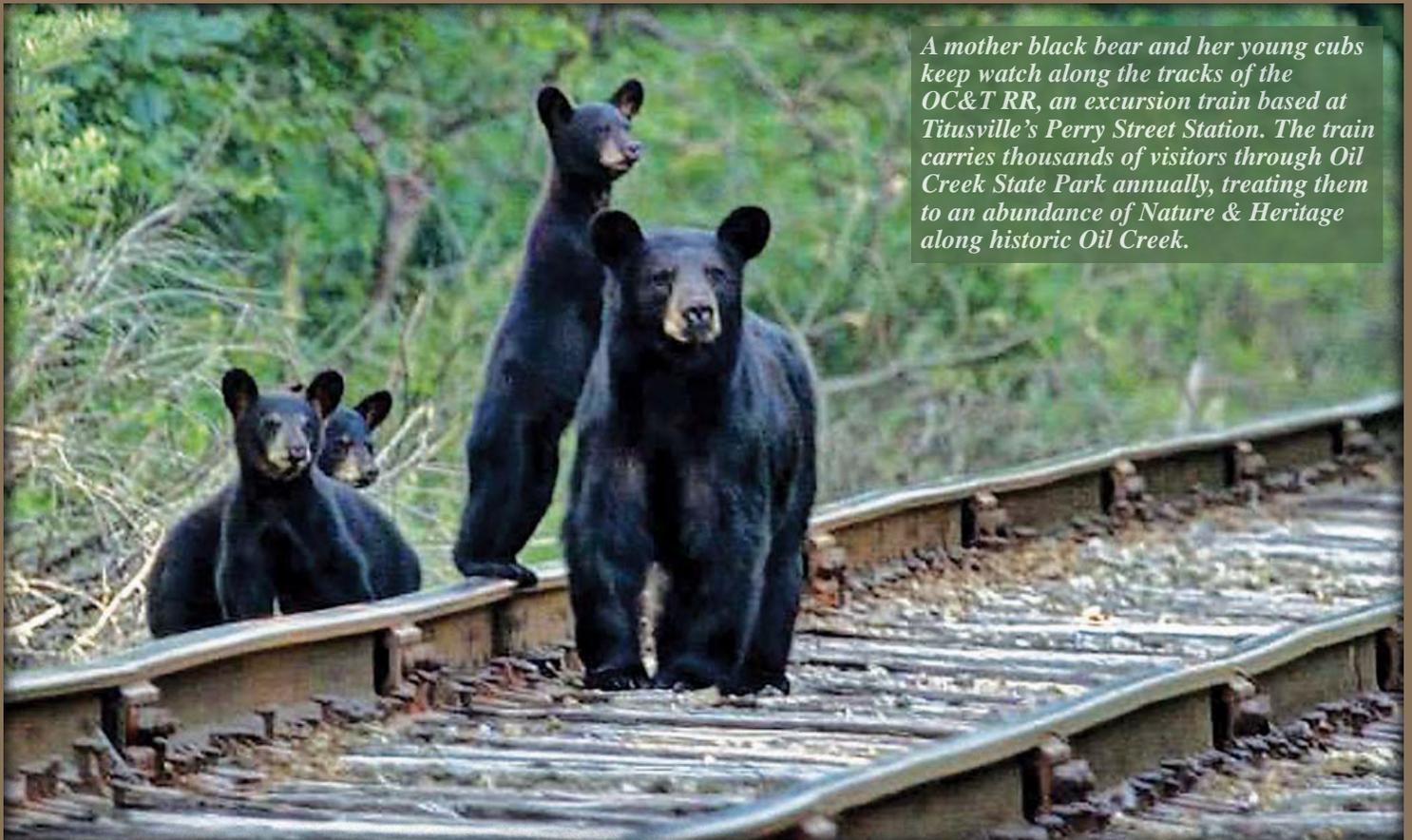
While Oil Creek is the park's main recreational attraction, it also contains the sites of PA's original oil industry, which developed along the creek. Historical markers detail special events of the Oil Boom era. The park is adjacent to Drake Well Museum, the site of the first commercial oil well in the world, struck in 1859.

The park offers picnicking, canoeing, fishing, hiking, camping, cross-country skiing, and four waterfalls - plus bicycling along 9.7 miles that's a part of the Erie to Pittsburgh Trail system. A historic tourist train ~ the Oil Creek & Titusville RR ~ journeys through the park.

Admission is free, as with all of Pennsylvania's 120 state parks and conservation areas. A great resource for all of these natural wonders is the PA Dept. of Natural Resources' website: [dcnr.state.pa.us/stateparks](http://dcnr.state.pa.us/stateparks)



*A pair of red fox kits practice their battling skills, then pause to study the photographer.*



*A mother black bear and her young cubs keep watch along the tracks of the OC&T RR, an excursion train based at Titusville's Perry Street Station. The train carries thousands of visitors through Oil Creek State Park annually, treating them to an abundance of Nature & Heritage along historic Oil Creek.*



*A trio of pileated woodpecker chicks compete for morsels from the safety of their forest home.*

The old growth trees and abundant waterways of Oil Creek State Park provide ideal homes for birds of many breeds and colors. Some are just passing through, part of the Lake Erie flyway that also includes Presque Isle State Park, Erie Bluffs State Park and many other watery sections of northwestern PA.

It's easy to zoom through the park along the miles of paved trailways, which run along once-abandoned rail lines that mostly follow Oil Creek. This incredible trail segment is maintained by PA DCNR personnel at Oil Creek State Park.

Be aware of hunting seasons when hiking through the park's endless woodlands, much of which is open to hunters. Check with the PA Game Commission for details.

**Oil Creek State Park office:**  
 (814) 676-5915 email: [oilcreeksp@pa.gov](mailto:oilcreeksp@pa.gov)  
 305 State Park Rd., Oil City, PA 16301

☀️ The park is open daily from sunrise to sunset.



*Atop one of Oil Creek's tallest trees, this giant nest of bald eagles attracted the ongoing attention of wildlife photographers. After concerns for the eagles' privacy were raised, the issue was settled amicably as the photographers were hundreds of feet away.*

*Wildlife Journey Photography* 

*Titusville's Dave Bowser has spent much of his life outdoors ~ observing, learning and just wanting to be one with the world around him. Almost three years ago, he began taking pictures during his travels and has developed a true love for capturing special moments he can cherish for a lifetime, as well as share with others.*



*A wild turkey and her poult tiptoe over the old, yet active, railroad tracks that thread through Oil Creek State Park, between Titusville and Oil City.*



*A mother merganser provides her ducklings a ride in the fresh flowing waters of Oil Creek.*



*A proud mother wood duck and her eleven ducklings head up Oil Creek during the chilly Spring of 2014.*