



Signals

News and notes from the
Hudson Valley Rail Trail Association
Highland, NY 12528
www.hudsonvalleyrailtrail.net

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Westward Ho! Comes Closer to Reality for Trail

by Rafael Díaz

With the linkup of the Hudson Valley Rail Trail with Walkway Over the Hudson now completed, much to the delight of locals and the many visitors to Highland, the focus of attention is now shifting to expansion of the trail westward. Under contract with the Town of Lloyd, Barton & Loguidice PC has just completed the in-detail *Draft Design Report* of what it would take to extend the trail from its current terminus at Tony Williams Park all the way to South Street across from Lowe's and close to the Town's border with New Paltz.

The expansion would add 1.9 miles to the existing Hudson Valley Rail Trail's 3.7 miles to total almost 6 miles of paved off-road, all-weather pedestrian/bicycle trail, 12 feet wide. This would make possible a long-held dream: Creation of a network of trails in Ulster and Dutchess counties with the connecting tissue being our trail and Walkway. Barton & Loguidice, which designed and completed the work

INSIDE: Ice Age & More, p. 6
"A natural setting little changed since the retreat of the last glacier 15,000 years ago ..."

of the Eastern Expansion of our Rail Trail to Walkway, is also in the midst of a contract to explore how to connect our Rail Trail to the Wallkill Rail Trail in New Paltz. Such a link is a unique challenge as the two railroads on which the two trails were built never connected; they were competing railways.

The Western Expansion project will be funded by a matching grant with the New York State Department of Transportation.
(continued on page 4)

Breakfast At Black Creek

To kick off the summer as we usually do on the Rail Trail, we will be having our Annual Breakfast at the Black Creek beginning at 9AM on June 4th. It is all free to the public.

This is also the annual meeting for the Hudson Valley Rail Trail Association, in which members, whose dues are paid up thru May 30th, will elect board directors. This is an opportunity to hear about developments and programs on the trail.

As a special treat, Jack Maguire, Chair of Highland's Environmental Conservation Council, will give insights about the setting around you (see his article on page 6). ♦

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President's Message

Our Hudson Valley Rail Trail continues to gain in popularity, not only locally, but in places far and wide. Look at some of the attention we are getting.

- » *The Hudson River Valley Greenway Land and Water Trails won the 2011 Heart of Green Award and we can share in some of that honor. The Hudson Valley Rail Trail has been part of the Greenway Trails system since 1997 when we were officially designated as a "Greenway Trail."*
- » *Hudson Valley Magazine featured our 2011 WinterFest in its Kids Corner section of the magazine as a must visit. Cablevision News also found the event newsworthy by featuring a video segment of the event on their news channel.*
- » *The Middletown Times Herald Record's "GO" section in January voted us as the year's second most popular place to bike with the Orange Heritage Trail taking first honors.*
- » *Hudson Valley Magazine last October named our Learn to Run Program "Best No-Cost Alternative to Going to the Gym."*
- » *The Long Weekends Magazine featured our Rail Trail in its Winter issue as a great New York State "Outdoor Activity".*
- » *VisitVortex.com featured a video during the Fall/Winter season, narrated by Town Supervisor Ray Costantino, highlighting the outstanding features of our trail.*
- » *Adventure Cycling Association recently added the Hudson Valley Rail Trail as part of its Atlantic Coast Route Map that takes cyclists from Bar Harbor in Maine to Key West in Florida.*

With the westward expansion of the trail, from Riverside Road to South Street in the final design phase, and a feasibility study underway to find a way to connect the Hudson Valley Rail Trail to the Wallkill Valley Rail Trail, our trail will only become more popular as time passes. In the meantime, get out there and enjoy all that our wonderful trail has to offer.

Claire

Claire R. Costantino, President
Hudson Valley Rail Trail Association, Inc.

Rail Trail Wants You

The Hudson Valley Rail Trail Association is looking for new board members to help maintain the Rail Trail as well as work on events and programs that utilize the great setting this ribbon of recreation and reflection provides to visitors.

This is an active Board of Directors with members taking on individual responsibilities. Your reward will be the satisfaction of knowing you are making a difference in the community. Inquiries should be directed to Claire Costantino at rebena1@aol.com or 845-691-2066. ♦



Signals

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Learn-To-Run Program In 10th Season

by Rafael Díaz

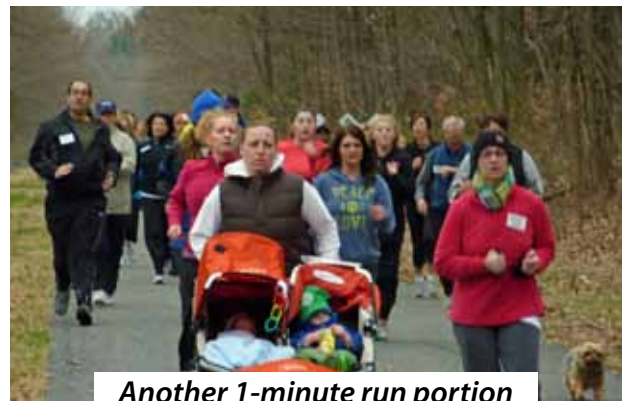
The Learn-To-Run Program got off to a great start in mid-April for its 10th season. Some 40 individuals came out to participate, a record for the program. And this did not include kids being pushed in two running-strollers by parents. Nor did this count the 10 past graduates who came out to help the latest class achieve the goal they themselves accomplished not so long ago: In 10 weeks learn to run non-stop for 20 minutes.

A week later, the class out did itself. In pouring rain and low-40s degree temperatures when it would have been understandable not to show up, most of the class braved the weather including the stroller pushers who now numbered four. Everyone, despite being soaked, managed to complete the lesson.

As you can see from the photos below taken at the first day's lesson, these running classes are humanity in motion in all shapes and sizes. Ages

range from kids to AARP members. Most are female; to paraphrase an old movie "men don't need no stinking lessons."

The lessons are 20 or 21 minutes long with the first one consisting of sets of run 1-minute and walk 2 minutes. Later lessons increase the running and eventually reduce the walking break times until the class reaches the goal of 20-minutes of non-stop running. ♦



Another 1-minute run portion



Starting off with a 1-minute run portion



Stretching afterwards



Walking a 2-minute break portion



Happy to complete first lesson

Westward Ho! (continued from page 1)

ment of Transportation (NYSDOT) and the Federal Highway Administration. The project, in accordance with NYSDOT practice, runs from West to East and is divided into three segments.

- **Segment A is from South Street to a Transition Point with the abandoned old rail bed corridor.** It is 0.66 miles in length and goes



alongside the south side of Route 299. It will be set back from the road by the 8-foot road shoulder and a 5-foot buffer zone.

- **Segment B is further away from Route 299 and transitions on to the abandoned rail bed.** It then continues eastward to reach New Paltz Road. It is 0.5 miles in length. This segment goes over Black Creek via a small culvert and goes over a short stretch of wetlands that can be viewed up close.
- **Segment C is from Segment B to Tony Williams Park.** It is 0.75 miles long. This segment offers rewarding experiences. It crosses over Black Creek at a point where the stream drops over an impressive waterfall. The trail also goes through a lengthy rock cut that is among the deepest to be found anywhere on the rest of the existing trail. This segment would then go under a bridge currently being built on New Paltz Road as well as under South Riverside Road to reach Tony Williams Park and the current trail.

(continued on next page)



The project as designed by Barton & Loguidice would cost \$3.6 million that includes a 15% allowance for contingencies and 10% for incidentals. Segments A and B represent relatively modest portion of total costs at \$600,000 and \$720,000 respectively. Segment C is the most expensive at some \$2.3 million, which is to be expected given the sizable expense of going under South Riverside Road and some other construction factors.

Funds Available and Options

The Town of Lloyd has been awarded a \$2 million grant for the Western Expansion under an SAF-ETEA-LU Transportation Enhancement Program (TEP). It is an 80/20 grant in which the Town will get \$1.6 million and have to put up the rest.

As you can see, the project costs as envisioned in the *Draft Design Report* exceed the grant funds that are currently available. Segment C alone would take up all the funds and more.

One possible alternative is to concentrate on getting Segment C done and, for now, put Segments B and C on a back burner. Also, the draft design is being looked at with an eye to cut back on some of the costs so that Segment C could be covered under the existing grant.

There is lot to be said about such an approach that concentrates on completing Segment C. Doing this would take care of the most costly segment. This then would bring the Hudson Valley Rail Trail and its paved all weather track to the vicinity of Rt. 299.

With that major project done, or in the works, the Town would be in a good position to seek further funding to complete Segments A and B. Funds for those two segments would make possible the widely-desired connection of Walkway and our trail to the Walkill Rail Trail in New Paltz.

Whatever is decided, the exciting news is that the trail will be extended west from its current terminus at Tony Williams Park. ♦

Rail Trail Events In 2011

Annual Membership Meeting and Breakfast at Black Creek June 4, 2011 At 9:00 AM. This is National Trail Day. Free breakfast with music. Learn about future plans for the Rail Trail. Hear a nature talk about the surrounding marsh. Members vote for directors to the board of the HVRTA. On Rail Trail at Black Creek.

Hudson Valley 5K Race/Walk August 20th, 9AM. Event is on the Rail Trail and begins at Caboose at 75 Haviland Road near Walkway.

Harvest MoonWalk September 9th, 7:30-8:30PM: Begins at Rail Trail Depot at 101 New Paltz Road. The only time you can walk the Rail Trail at night and enjoy the full moon. \$5 admission includes bonfire, storyteller & refreshments.

Learn to Run Program starts September 17th at 9AM at the Depot. A 10 week program that will make a runner of you, whether old or young, able to run 20 minutes nonstop. Meet at Rail Trail Depot at 101 New Paltz Road.

Hudson Valley Rail Trail Gala - An Evening Under the Stars! October 8, 2011, starts at 6PM. The event will take place on the trail at 75 Haviland Road beginning with a cocktail reception followed by dinner and dancing. This is a black tie optional event and will be held rain or star-shine under festively decorated tents.

HudsonFest 2011, October 9, 2011, 10AM to 6PM. A festival on the Rail Trail to celebrate what the Valley has to offer with a focus on the arts, artisans, crafts people, farmers, wineries, local restaurants, food vendors, distilleries, breweries, agri-business, non-profits and community service organizations. Entrance at 75 Haviland Rd.

Winterfest-January 14, 2012, 11AM-2PM. Chili cook-off by various restaurants, ice carving demonstration, roasted chestnuts and toasted marshmallows. Hay rides on the trail, kids activities. 101 New Paltz Road.

A Very Special Thanks To:



**ANTHONY C. VIGLIOTTI, D.M.D.
FRANK A. VIGLIOTTI, D.M.D.
Periodontics and Implantology
29 Fox Street
Poughkeepsie, New York 12601**

Of Turtles, Pioneers, Falcons, and Moss

by Jack Maguire

For the last year, we have had *two* Hudson Valley Rail Trails (HVRT), thanks to what I call the Great Divide—the “temporary” bridge reconstruction barriers where New Paltz Road crosses over the trail. This has forced visitors to the trail to choose which part to use.

In fact the HVRT always has and always gives you choices. It offers a variety of **natural** worlds as we walk, run, ride, or glide along the trail, each traveler’s itinerary differing, based on his/her point of view. I’d like to focus here on just three of my personal worlds, which, in true explorer’s fashion, I have dubbed with private names: *Ice Age*, *Narrows*, and *Parkway*.

Remains of The Ice Age

The Ice Age lies on the West HVRT, extending east from Tony Williams Field to the closest slope of Illinois Mountain. This segment is officially known as part of the Black Creek Water Trail, an education and recreation site initiated by the Lloyd Environmental Conservation Council and built and maintained by the Town of Lloyd.

Here we can observe a natural setting little changed since retreat of the last glacier 15,000 years ago (hence the Ice Age reference). This glacier carved the Black Creek out of solid bedrock, giving it a firmly-banked waterway that has kept its vitality and pristine quality into our own prone-to-pollute era. Yes, the water is dark, but it’s due to tannin leaching naturally from oak and hemlock bark. American poet Walt Whitman, who often visited this creek, more lyrically described it as “a stream of hurrying amber.”



Stairs down to pool on Black Creek

The wetlands surrounding the Black Creek offer habitat to countless birds, fish, frogs, turtles, dragonflies, muskrats, beavers, and coyotes. Before the wetlands were crossed during the last 150 years by the Highland-to-New-Paltz trolley line, the railroad, and Route 299, they were much bigger, merging on Lloyd’s west border with the Swartekill (Dutch for black creek) and its wetlands. Beautiful as these vast wetlands must have been, early 19th-century pioneers heading from New England to the Midwest cursed them as The Great Discouraging Swamp because the wetlands stopped them in their tracks. As a result, we have the designators Illinois Mountain and Ohioville, named by these settlers for goals they never reached.

Today we can still appreciate how formidable an obstacle the Ice Age was back then, especially when we watch it flood in the spring. Most of my memories of walking through it, however, revolve around the security it provides for some of my favorite animals.

Until a few years ago a blue heron rookery existed north of the Black Creek Stairs, just beyond where the Black Creek bends east. If I waited long enough, I had a good chance of sighting one of these grand, prehistoric-looking birds with a six-foot wingspan rising elegantly up into the sky, maybe startled by my sudden appearance on its horizon.

Since then, a beaver dam has created a sizeable pool at the bend that has swallowed the rookery, but blue herons can sometimes be seen hovering over their sunken homesite. Fortunately the pool also brought new life to the area. It occasionally breeds tall, firecracker-like cardinal flowers; and last fall, when the water level dropped low enough that I could walk to the pool from the Black Creek Stairs, I was lucky enough to spot two small otters scampering there.

On the opposite side of the HVRT from the Black Creek Stairs a steep dirt path descends straight down to the east bank of the creek. I call this path *Turtle Walk*, because female Eastern box turtles climb it every spring to lay their eggs in higher ground.

A Passage Thru The Narrows

The Narrows segment of the HVRT is on the East HVRT between the Great Divide and the New Paltz Road trail head. Here slate cliffs rise high and close on either side. In late winter and spring, these natural walls, fractured into intricate crystalline patterns, take on the character of an art gallery, showing us dazzling

ice formations, morphing slowly but surely through miniature waterfalls into plush tapestries of moss.

Here I see the first trilliums and skunk cabbage of the year. And here I once experienced my most cherished moment as a birder.

It was dusk on a beautiful spring day. I was alone on the trail and all around me was silence. Suddenly I heard the song of a hermit thrush coming from above. The American naturalist John Burroughs, whose retreat *Slabsides* lies farther down the Black Creek, labeled this song the “loveliest, most haunting of all bird songs.” He claimed it sounded as if the bird were saying, “O holy, holy! O clear away, clear away! O clear up, clear up.” I was thrilled to hear this song myself almost in my own backyard.

The Graceful Parkway Section

The Parkway segment is also on the East HVRT, extending from the bridge over Vineyard Avenue to the new Highland Station area at the entrance to Walkway Over The Hudson. Here the earth is gracefully contoured to allow the railbed-now-trail to progress easily through the hamlet of Highland and the high lands that give the hamlet its name.

This segment reminds me of the Taconic Parkway. Built in the late 1920s before major roads became more streamlined for traffic speed and volume into expressways, the Taconic Parkway represents a



View along the Parkway segment

happier marriage of human and natural creativity. It was engineered with special care so that motorists could enjoy their ride along, over, and within the surrounding terrain.

Crossing the East HVRT’s Parkway from either direction, we’re gently guided to observe the hamlet in an entirely different way, as train passengers once did. Meanwhile we can look up, perhaps behold falcons, hawks, or eagles cruising the banks of the Hudson and absorbing their own vision of the turf below.

As you navigate your personal passages along the HVRT, I encourage you to identify and name for yourself the segments that resonate with you. Hopefully you will share with others what these segments mean to you and what makes them such unique and marvelous places to visit. ♦

Membership Form

The Hudson Valley Rail Trail Association is a not-for-profit organization dedicated to creating, maintaining, promoting, and improving the Hudson Valley Rail Trail for the benefit of the public. Please help by becoming a member and volunteering your talents.

\$15 Individual \$20 Family \$50-\$99 Patron \$100-499 Supporting \$500 Benefactor

Name _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____ Phone _____ E-Mail _____

I'd like to volunteer for:

Trail Maintenance
 Special Events
 Ecology Projects
 Other (Specify) _____

Newsletter
 Fund Raising
 Refreshments

Please send form and check payable: Hudson Valley Rail Trail Association, Inc.
12 Church Street, Highland, New York 12528
www.hudsonvalleyrailtrail.net

Signals



...from the Hudson Valley Rail Trail Association

Don't miss!

Breakfast at Black Creek 2011 on the Hudson Valley Rail Trail

**Where Rail Trail Goes Over The Black Creek
(Half Mile From Tony Williams Park)**

June 4, 2011 starts at 9AM

www.hudsonvalleyrailtrail.net

ADDRESS CORRECTION REQUESTED

Highland, New York 12528

12 Church Street

Hudson Valley Rail Trail Association, Inc.

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