

APPENDIX A
Public Involvement



Press Release, June 5, 2007

NOTE - Please run this press release as an article **one week** prior to the public meeting date.

Public Meeting 1 – Indian Creek Valley Hike-Bike Extension Trail Feasibility Study

The Mountain Watershed Association, Inc. and the project study committee in conjunction with a Pennsylvania Department of Conservation and Natural Resources will hold a public meeting on June 12, 2007 at the Indian Creek Valley Community Center, from 6:30 PM - 8:00 PM. The meeting is being held to announce to public the start of the Indian Creek Valley Hike-Bike Trail Extension Feasibility Study and to explain the feasibility study process. This Feasibility Study is the initial planning activity to determine if it is viable to extend the existing Indian Creek Valley Hike-Bike Trail to the north and south of its present location in Saltlick Township, Fayette County. In addition to the announcement of the feasibility study, the study team hopes to gather public input on the feasibility study. Interested parties are invited to attend.

Mountain Watershed Letterhead

INDIAN CREEK VALLEY HIKE-BIKE TRAIL EXTENSION: FEASIBILITY STUDY

Westmoreland and Fayette Counties
Cook Township, Donegal Township
Saltlick Township, Springfield Township,
and Connellsville Township

DATE

NOTICE OF STUDIES TO BE CONDUCTED

Mr. John Doe
123 Main St.
Town, PA

Property Lot and Block No.: 123-A-123

SALUTATION

In conjunction with the PA Department of Conservation and Natural Resources (PADCNR), the Mountain Watershed Association (MWA) is initiating a study to determine the feasibility of extending the existing Indian Creek Valley Hike-Bike Trail, which is currently located in Saltlick Township.

A public open house and meeting to announce the start of the feasibility study will be held on June 7, 2007 at the Indian Creek Valley Community Center beginning at 7:00 pm. The meeting will present the feasibility study process and is open to the public.

Part of the feasibility study will involve investigation of the abandoned Indian Creek Railroad grade in portions of Donegal Township, Westmoreland County and Saltlick and Springfield townships in Fayette County. Research conducted by the MWA has determined that the above referenced property parcel contains and/or is adjacent to the abandoned railroad grade to be investigated. MWA employees and contractors may need to enter this property on the abandoned railroad grade to conduct investigations. These investigations will be brief and confined to the existing railroad grade; the investigations are unobtrusive, involving only note taking and photographs. The investigation of the abandoned Indian Creek Railroad grade will be conducted sporadically throughout the summer of 2007.

Should you have any questions regarding the trail feasibility studies, please notify Deb Simko at the MWA office at (724) 455-4200. The MWA appreciates your cooperation with the PADCNR's responsibility for planning and developing recreational facilities for the citizens of Pennsylvania.

Sincerely,

Beverly Braverman
Executive Director,
Mountain Watershed Association

Mountain Watershed Letterhead

INDIAN CREEK VALLEY HIKE-BIKE TRAIL EXTENSION: FEASIBILITY STUDY

Westmoreland and Fayette Counties
Cook Township, Donegal Township
Saltlick Township, Springfield Township,
and Connellsville Township

DATE

PUBLIC MEETING NOTIFICATION

Mr. John Doe
123 Main St.
Town, PA

SALUTATION

In conjunction with the PA Department of Conservation and Natural Resources (PADCNR), the Mountain Watershed Association (MWA) is initiating a study to determine the feasibility of extending the existing Indian Creek Valley Hike-Bike Trail, which is currently located in Saltlick Township.

You are invited to a public open house and meeting to discuss the. The meeting will be held on June 7, 2007 beginning at 7:00 PM, at the Indian Creek Valley Community Center located off of Route 381 in Indian Head. Representatives of the MWA and its study consultants will be available to explain the trail feasibility process and receive your input.

If you require any additional information regarding the meeting or the trail feasibility studies, please notify Deb Simko at the MWA office at (724) 455-4200. The MWA appreciates your cooperation with the PADCNR's responsibility for planning and developing recreational facilities for the citizens of Pennsylvania.

Sincerely,

Beverly Braverman
Executive Director,
Mountain Watershed Association

PUBLIC INFORMATIONAL MEETING

To announce the start of the:

INDIAN CREEK VALLEY HIKE-BIKE TRAIL EXTENSION

FEASIBILITY STUDY

June 12, 2007

Indian Creek Valley Community Center

The Indian Creek Valley Community Center is located along State Routes 711/381
approximately 1/2 mile south of Indian Head

6:30 to 8:00 pm

All are welcomed to attend

Hosted by



In conjunction with the

Pennsylvania Department of Conservation and Natural Resources





INDIAN CREEK VALLEY HIKE-BIKE TRAIL EXTENSION

FEASIBILITY STUDY

**Public Informational Meeting
June 12, 2007**

Welcome

Thank you for attending this evening's public meeting; please sign the attendance list. This agenda summarizes the purpose and schedule for tonight's meeting. During the open house you are encouraged to look at the displays and talk to representatives of the Mountain Watershed Association and the study team.

Meeting Purpose

The meeting is being held to announce to the public the start of the Indian Creek Valley Hike-Bike Trail Feasibility Study and to explain the feasibility study process. The feasibility study is being initiated to evaluate the feasibility of extending the existing 6-mile trail both northward (approximately 6 miles to the Rt. 381 crossing of the Turnpike) and southward (approximately 18 miles to South Connellsville) to increase connectivity to the existing trails along the Youghiogheny River and in Forbes State Forest. In addition to the announcement of the feasibility study, we hope to gather public input on the feasibility study through tonight's meeting. To provide your input on the project, please take a few minutes to complete the attached questionnaire and deposit it in the survey box on your way out.

Informal Meeting Agenda

- 6:30 to 7:00 Open House & Refreshments
- 7:00 to 7:10 Welcome
- 7:10 to 7:20 Goals of the Feasibility Study and the Feasibility Study Process
- 7:20 to 7:40 Movie presentation
- 7:40 to 8:00 Open House

COMPONENTS OF THE TRAIL EXTENSION FEASIBILITY STUDY

- Develop study purpose
 - Describe/illustrate study's purpose, project area boundary, limitations, and mapping
- Legal feasibility review
 - Property ownership, ROW status, and determine potential acquisition/easement agreements
- Evaluate demand for potential users of the trail extension
 - Linkages and potential (current) users
- Physical inventory/assessment of the old railroad ROW
 - Physical, environmental, and cultural resources
- Develop a trail concept plan
- Evaluate trail operation, maintenance, and security issues
- Conduct financial feasibility analysis – cost estimates
- Public Participation
 - Public meetings and other activities to assist with public input/comments on the project

**INDIAN CREEK VALLEY
HIKE-BIKE TRAIL
EXTENSION
FEASIBILITY STUDY**

As part of its mission, the Mountain Watershed Association is committed to improving outdoor recreational opportunities within the Indian Creek Watershed.



LONG-RANGE GOAL

- To improve the recreational facilities within the Indian Creek Watershed through developing extensions to the existing Indian Creek Valley Hike-Bike Trail.

SHORT-TERM OBJECTIVES

- Study the feasibility of extending the existing trail in both directions.
- Conduct a public involvement process as part of the feasibility study.
- Develop trail concept plan.
- Complete a formal trail feasibility document.

LONG-TERM OBJECTIVES

- Make a determination of the viability of extending the trail from Route 31 to the Youghiogeny River.
- Make a determination of the viability of extending the trail from Route 31 to PW&S Trail system in Forbes State Forest.
- Identifying priorities for trail section development.
- Apply for funding to design and construct priority trail sections.
- Complete design and construction activities on priority trail sections.

**INDIAN CREEK VALLEY
HIKE-BIKE TRAIL
EXTENSION
FEASIBILITY STUDY**



INDIAN CREEK VALLEY HIKE-BIKE TRAIL EXTENSION

FEASIBILITY STUDY

**Public Informational Meeting: June 12, 2007
Individual Questionnaire Results**

1. Please indicate your interest in the Indian Creek Valley Hike-Bike Trail Extension. Check all that apply

- | | |
|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> I am a resident of Donegal Township
4 | <input type="checkbox"/> I am a resident of Saltlick Township
7 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> I am a resident of Springfield Township
4 | <input type="checkbox"/> I am a trail user
16 (53%) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> I own property adjacent to the old RR right-of-way
3 | <input type="checkbox"/> The old RR right-of-way runs through my property
2 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Other
5 | |

2. How often do you or members of your household use the existing Indian Creek Trail?

- | | | |
|--|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> More than 5 times per week
3 | <input type="checkbox"/> Once or twice per week
6 | <input type="checkbox"/> Never
2 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 3 to 5 times per week
6 | <input type="checkbox"/> Rarely, if ever
8 | <input type="checkbox"/> Once a month
2 |

3. What activities do you or members of your household use the existing trail for?

- | | | |
|--|--|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Walking/jogging
10 | <input type="checkbox"/> Access to Indian Creek
5 | <input type="checkbox"/> Nature walks or walking pet
6 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Cycling
22 | <input type="checkbox"/> Cross Country Skiing
8 | <input type="checkbox"/> Other
6 |

4. In your opinion, maintenance of the existing trail is:

- | | | | |
|---|-------------------------------------|------------------------------------|------------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Excellent
8 | <input type="checkbox"/> Good
15 | <input type="checkbox"/> Fair
2 | <input type="checkbox"/> Poor
3 |
|---|-------------------------------------|------------------------------------|------------------------------------|

5. In your opinion, safety and security along the existing trail is

- | | | | |
|---|-------------------------------------|------------------------------------|------------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Excellent
6 | <input type="checkbox"/> Good
12 | <input type="checkbox"/> Fair
5 | <input type="checkbox"/> Poor
2 |
|---|-------------------------------------|------------------------------------|------------------------------------|

6. Do you feel the conversion of the old railroad grade to a recreational trail has been a good use of the abandoned Indian Creek Railroad right-of-way within Saltlick Township?

- | | | |
|--|----------------------------------|----------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Yes
25 (83%) | <input type="checkbox"/> No
5 | Why or Why Not |
|--|----------------------------------|----------------|

7. Do you favor studying the feasibility of extending the existing trail both northward to Forbes State Forest and southward towards the Youghiogheny River to connect with other existing trails.

- | | | |
|--|----------------------------------|----------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Yes
24 (80%) | <input type="checkbox"/> No
5 | Why or Why Not |
|--|----------------------------------|----------------|

8. If you have any specific comments or concerns, please list them below:

- I do not want the public on my property.

- I want to maintain the privacy of my property.
- Concerns about crime and vandalism on rail-trails are unreasonable.
- A completed trail would be a healthy asset to the region.
- The trail extensions would provide recreation and tourism for the local townships.
- Who controls the illegal use of All-Terrain Vehicles on the trail?
- I would use the trail more if it had better connections to the Allegheny Passage.
- More portable toilets along the existing trail would be appreciated.
- The existing trail is in excellent condition, a tribute to the volunteers who do the work.

**Indian Creek Hike-Bike Trail Extension
Feasibility Study
Public Meeting 1
June 12, 2007
Indian Head Community Center
6:30 to 8:30**

A public meeting for the Indian Creek Hike-Bike Trail Extension was held at the Indian Head Community Center on June 12, 2007. The purpose of the first public meeting was to officially kick-off the trail extension feasibility study. The meeting began at 6:30 as an open house format until 7:00. Beverly Braverman (Bev), the executive Director of the Mountain Watershed, opened the formal presentation by welcoming everyone and introducing the project team and the Mountain Watershed staff and board of directors. Bev discussed Mountain Watershed and its mission and activities.

Tom Page, of Skelly & Loy, briefly reviewed the goals of the overall project as well as the location and limits of the proposed study area. Tom also discussed the components of the trail feasibility study.

Bev stated that they were welcoming individuals interested in the trail extension project to serve on the steering committee for the project.

Following this brief formal presentation, an extended question and discussion session was held. The following is a summary of the various concerns and comments that were voiced during this discussion period.

- Ownership issues of the rail corridor and what would the process be would private property be used or acquired. Concerns over the loss of property value.
- What will happen if a property owner or a group of adjacent property owner was against the trail?
- Adjacent land owners concerns about liability associated with the trail and trail users. How would the adjacent land owners be covered insurance wise against these liability issues?
- Land owners of the railroad grade and adjacent land owners were very concerned about the loss of privacy due to a public access trail bisecting their property. The residents in these areas live there because they are relatively inaccessible and private.
- Vandalism and crime associated with the public access of the trail is a big concern with the adjacent property owners.
- Some land owners stated that they utilize the old railroad grade as a means to access other parts of their property and in some cases their residence.
- Some land owners questioned if access for farming/cattle crossing be maintained along the trail?
- Who is responsible for the maintenance of the trail? Specifically a railroad tressel is used as part of a driveway in the Rogers Mills area. The family has been maintaining this structure for years.

- Some nearby residents and land owners use the existing railroad grade to access hunting areas. How will hunting rights surrounding the trail be regulated?
- Some land owners and local residents utilize the abandoned railroad right grade for riding ATVs and Horse riding. What will the permitted trail uses be?
- For various reasons there may be opportunities or needs for different alternatives to using the old railroad grade, for example areas where side roads parallel the old railroad grade.
- The condition of the old railroad grade and its structures may actually
- Cyclists and walkers are typically courteous users of trails
- Property values near the trail may actually increase
- Illegal trespassing, ATV use, and vandalism may actually decrease along the abandoned railroad grade.

Association to research trail extension to Connellsville

By Marjorie Wertz
FOR THE TRIBUNE-REVIEW
Monday, June 4, 2007

The Mountain Watershed Association is conducting a feasibility study to examine extending the Indian Creek Valley Hike-Bike Trail in Saltlick Township to the Yough River Trail in Connellsville.

"There is a lovely six-mile trail that goes through Saltlick Township, but it stops," said Beverly Braverman, executive director of the Mountain Watershed Association, a nonprofit corporation headquartered in Melcroft, Fayette County. The group works on the preservation and remediation of the Indian Creek watershed from Jones Mills in Westmoreland County to the Youghiogheny River, Fayette County.

"The area we are studying is a 22-mile length divided into five sections. We're hoping we can extend the trail through the entire watershed so it can be connected possibly to the Great Allegheny Passage," Braverman added.

The trail through Saltlick Township has existed for five to 10 years, said Tom Page, a natural resources manager with Skelly and Loy Consultants, of Monroeville. The firm is undertaking the feasibility study for the association.

"Mountain Watershed is taking the lead in trying to expand the trail from the north and south, from Donegal to the Westmoreland County line, and linking it to Linn Run State Park's mountain biking trails," Page said. "We want to link this trail to the Saltlick Township trail."

From the Saltlick section, the trail would continue to the Yough River and, if possible, link to the Yough River Trail.

"This will be much more difficult to accomplish because of the CSX railroad line that's active," Page said. "The study will determine if it's possible to build a bridge across the Yough River or follow the rail-to-trail line."

Section 4 of the proposed expansion covers a five-mile section extending from Mill Run to the Yough River.

"We want to see if we can get across the river to hook up with the Yough River Trail at Camp Carmel between Connellsville and Ohiovale," Braverman said.

The association is seeking public input during an informational meeting from 6:30-8 p.m. on June 12 at the Indian Creek Valley Community Center, along state routes 711 and 381, about one-half mile south of Indian Head.

"The association has control of some of the rights of way, and part of the study is to look at all the properties along the trail. We'll be doing field work and investigate what the areas of the trail looks like so we can get an idea of some of the issues that can be accomplished, such as where the trail crosses Indian Creek," Page said.

Once a draft of the study has been prepared, a second public meeting will be scheduled. Page said information from public input will then be collected and a final study will be made available for residents.

The study was funded by an \$18,900 matching grant from the state Department of Conservation and Natural Resources.

Daily Courier

ICV trail extension possible

By Rachel R. Basinger
DAILY COURIER
Friday, June 15, 2007

The Indian Creek Valley Hike-Bike Trail feasibility study has begun.

The Mountain Watershed Association received a grant for the study through the Department of Conservation and Natural Resources. A public meeting -- a requirement of the grant -- was held this week.

Most of the residents in attendance were skeptical about the possible extension of the 6-mile trail and opposed it.

Property owners adjacent to the proposed six-mile extension, which would run north to the Route 381 crossing of the Pennsylvania Turnpike, and the proposed 18-mile extension, which would run south to South Connellsville, had concerns about privacy, liability and the continued use of their rights-of-way.

"I don't think anyone is looking to shove anything down anyone's throat," said Tom Page with Skelly and Loy, the firm putting together the study. "Right now we're just in the planning stages to see what could be and then go from there."

His comments did not seem to appease the crowd, however.

One resident said it already seemed like a done deal.

"You have drawings here of where you think it will go and everything," he said. "But if all the property owners along that proposed extension did not want the trail running through their property, would you still do it?"

Page said he did not have the authority to answer that question.

Beverly Braverman, executive director of the watershed association, said the group intends to address each property owner's concerns and try to come to an amicable solution.

"There have been other trails developed and occasionally there are owners that are against it totally," she said. "They still developed the trail, but they just went around that person's property."

The proposed extensions follow the old railroad tracks.

One woman was concerned about being able to access her property; she has to use the railroad right-of-way to get to her home, she said.

Another resident said the whole reason she purchased the property where she lives is for privacy, which she felt would be compromised by heavy use of a bike trail there.

Still another individual was concerned about being able to continue riding his ATV along the tracks to get to his hunting spot.

"You're going to come in here and take my property off of me and tell me that I can't ride my four-wheeler there anymore, but other people can come in and ride their bikes there," he said.

Braverman said they are not against looking into a multi-use trail, if that's what people want and noted that there are some throughout the rails-to-trails program, including in State College.

She added that privacy issues can be addressed by simply planting hedges along the trail.

Another concern was the possibility of the property owners being held liable if someone wandered from the trail and got hurt on their property or if the property owner's dog would happen to run to the trail and bite someone.

Page said there is legislation out there specifically for recreational trail use, that if an individual utilizing the property is not paying for it, then the property owner cannot be liable.

Another individual added that there is a Good Samaritan waiver, which is specific legislation in place for protecting landowners in those situations.

"We're not trying to alienate anyone who is against the trail, because there may be ways to mitigate certain situations," Page added.

Everyone at the meeting was encouraged to get involved by serving on the steering committee for the proposed trail extension.

"There are a number of opportunities to be involved in the planning process," Braverman said.

The purpose of looking into the possible extension of the existing hike-bike trail is to increase connectivity to the existing trails along the Youghiogheny River and in Forbes State Forest.

While no one could answer how long the feasibility study would take to complete, they did say it would include the development of a purpose, legal feasibility review (such as property ownership and potential acquisition/easement agreements) and evaluating a demand for potential users.

The study will include the development of a trail concept plan, evaluating trail operation, maintenance and security issues and getting cost estimates.

While the watershed group's short-term objectives include studying the feasibility of extending the trail and developing a trail concept plan, its long-term objectives are to determine if it's even viable to extend the trail as well as identify and apply for funding to construct priorities for trail section development.

Rachel R. Basinger can be reached at rbasinger@tribweb.com or (724) 626-3536.

Property owners against trail

BY PATTY YAUGER

Herald-Standard

SALTICK TWP. — Several property owners along a proposed bike/hike trail are reticent to support its construction, citing liability and privacy issues as their major concerns.

However, Mountain Watershed Association (MWA) officials believe the issues can amicably be resolved.

Approximately 50 area residents gathered at the Indian Creek Valley Community Center to learn about the proposed trail route that would extend the existing Indian Creek Valley Bike-Hike Trail to the north and south via an abandoned railway corridor.

The MWA recently received a state Department of Conservation and Natural Resources (DCNR) matching grant to conduct a feasibility study for the project.

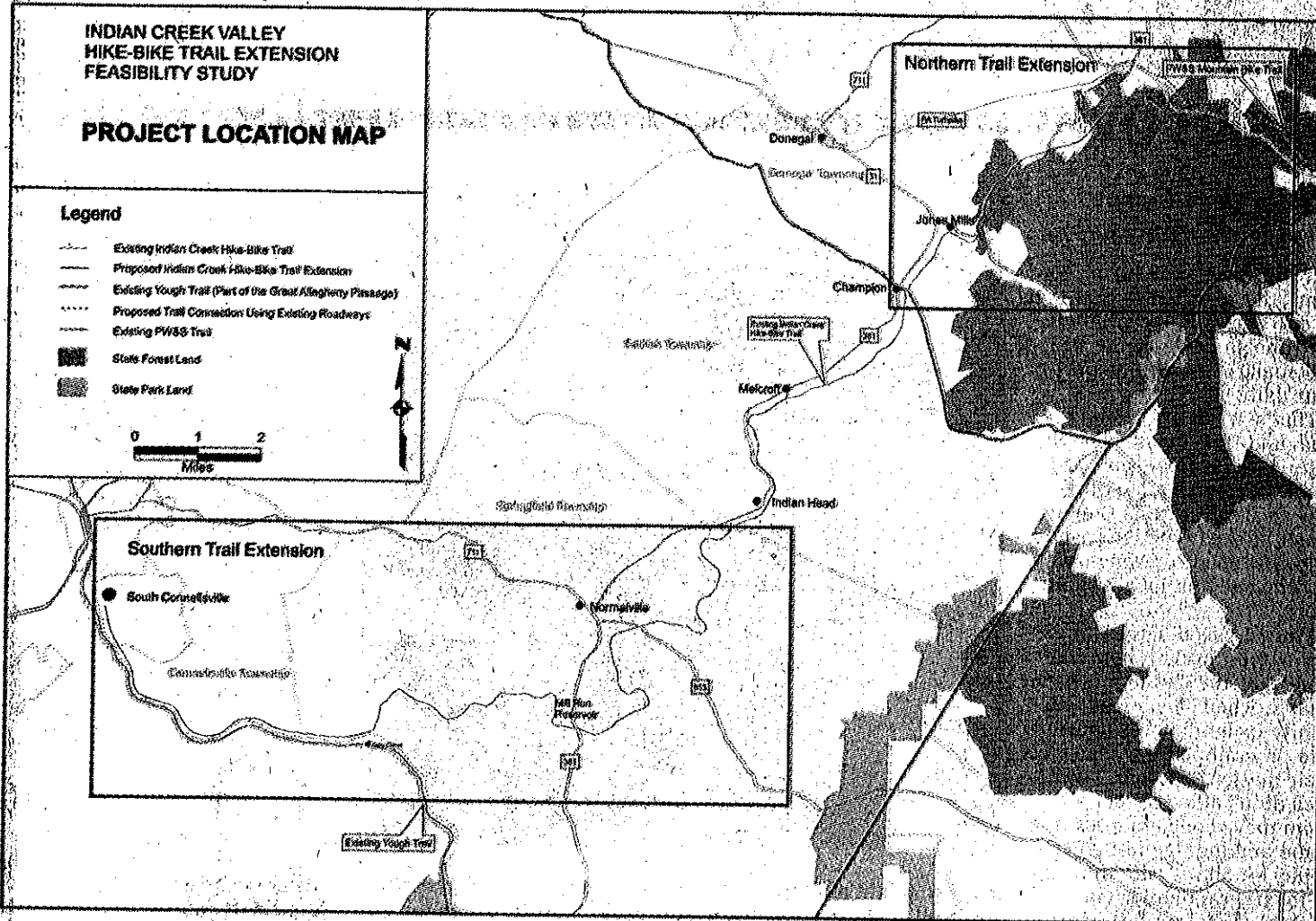
"We're just in the very early stages," said Thomas Page, Skelly and Loy natural resources manager, in response to the residents' concerns about the project. "It is going to be several years until you see any work begin. The feasibility study allows us to document the concerns and try to address them."

The Pittsburgh engineering and environmental consultants are conducting the feasibility study.

While portions of the proposed trail are owned by the MWA or located within state-owned property, some is privately owned with residents having rights of way across the railroad property.

The residents expressed concern that entranceways would be blocked or their use of motorized vehicles curtailed if the trail was developed.

"You are going to tell me to stop riding my ATV on my property to allow you to ride your bike?" asked one property owner. "What if someone strays off the trail and gets hurt on my property? Who's respon-



Trail

Property owners voice concerns

Continued from B1

sible?"

MWA Executive Director Beverly Braverman said that the intent of the project is not to take away property owner rights, but to enhance the existing trail.

"There are ways to work it out," she said. "It will be our job to talk to the attorneys and figure out a solution."

The study will allow for the determination of the project area boundaries and the map-

ping of the area.

Page said that the northern extension would stretch from Route 31 to the PW&S Trail system in Forbes State Forest in neighboring Westmoreland County, while the southern portion of the trail would extend to the Youghiogheny River at Connellsville, connecting with the Great Allegheny Passage.

Other goals of the feasibility study would be to determine property ownership; potential usage; physical, environment and cultural resources along the trail; future operation, maintenance and security issues; and costs tied to the development.

"The study would determine how the trail should be built," said Page. "There are sections that would be less expensive to develop than others. Perhaps

the first phase could be completed on property owned by the (MWA)."

Page estimated it would take a year for the study to be completed. He speculated the municipalities where the trail would be located along with the MWA would seek grant funding to construct the trail.

Braverman, meanwhile, said that the meeting provided an opportunity for the residents to express their views and those overseeing the project to begin addressing the concerns.

"We have a whole lot of work to do," she said. "These folks have honest and very legitimate concerns."

"I am not a trail expert, but I am very optimistic about the process."

The residents have requested an on-site meeting with the

project overseers, which Braverman sees as an opportunity.

"The Rogers Mill area (where some of the concerned residents live) is one of the most beautiful in the watershed area," she said. "This might be an area where a conservation easement is needed."

"I want this project to add value to every property, to the trail and the community."

Regional Trail Corp. (RTC) President Dexston Reed said the new trail, if constructed, will add to the enjoyment of trail users.

"New bike and hike trails are being built throughout the area and they provide such a stellar opportunity to explore new areas in our beautiful mountains, places where very few have traveled before," he said.