

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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122-MILE BIKING SOJOURN TO DEMONSTRATE THE BENEFITS OF REGIONAL TRAIL SYSTEMS

RTC and MRTC to host inaugural West Virginia Rail-Trail Sojourn April 24-26

Morgantown, W.Va. – Approximately 100 cyclists will converge in Morgantown on April 24-26, 2015, to participate in Rails-to-Trails Conservancy’s inaugural West Virginia Rail-Trail Sojourn. Intended to highlight the benefits and impact of regional trail networks, the sojourn will draw attention to missing links between the Mon River/Caperton/Deckers Creek Rail-Trails and other rail-trails in West Virginia and Pennsylvania that, if completed, could result in a 180-mile trail.

Cyclists will begin their journey on the Mon River Trail South, riding from Morgantown to Fairmont, and continue north on the Mon River Trail to Point Marion, Pennsylvania, and the planned Sheepskin Trail. To complete the journey, participants will head east on the Deckers Creek Trail into Preston County.

The riders will experience the beauty of the area and see firsthand how making connections between these trail systems can create a north-central West Virginia and southwestern Pennsylvania version of the Great Allegheny Passage (GAP). Generating more than \$40 million in direct spending from trail users annually (as well as an average of \$114 in spending per day from overnight visitors), the 150-mile GAP demonstrates the significant economic impact that can be generated from rail-trails.

In addition to an influx of money from trail users to adjacent towns and cities, rail-trails provide transportation alternatives for commuters, encourage healthy lifestyles, raise property values and support trailside businesses.

A coalition of trail advocates, including government and nonprofit employees, community stakeholders and representatives of private foundations are working together to position trail development as a priority, in order to complete and connect trails in the region. The goal is to create a 1,400-mile network so trail users can easily move from trail to trail, city to city, and town to town, spreading the economic and healthy lifestyle benefits along the way.

RTC 2015 West Virginia Rail-Trail Sojourn – Itinerary

Day 1 (April 24), cyclists will ride from Morgantown to Prickett’s Fort State Park on the Mon River Trail South and connect to the Marion County Trail, which ends at the edge of Fairmont,

West Virginia. If there was a connecting trail through Fairmont to the 16-mile West Fork River Trail, it would be possible to ride from Morgantown all the way to Shinnston in Harrison County, West Virginia. Creating a trail connection through Fairmont will require funding and property easements or acquisition.

Day 2 (April 25), cyclists will ride the Mon River Trail North, crossing the Mason-Dixon Line into Pennsylvania and then heading onto the soon-to-be constructed Sheepskin Trail leading to Point Marion. Participants will continue following the Sheepskin Trail corridor on a country road along the Cheat River to the Cheat Lake Trail, and then cross over the state line again back into West Virginia.

Day 3 (April 26), the final day, will take riders on the Deckers Creek Trail, which starts in Morgantown, West Virginia, and ends just beyond Reedsville in Preston County. The Friends of the Cheat Trail Committee has set a goal to extend the Deckers Creek Trail and build two other rail-trails in Preston County.

For more information about the 2015 West Virginia Rail-Trail Sojourn, go to railstotrails.org/sojourn.

For more information about the Mon River Trails and Deckers Creek Trail, go to montrails.org or contact Ella Belling, MRTC executive director, at ella@montrails.org or 304.692.6782.

****Media Alert for April 25, 2015****

A short trailhead opening ceremony will take place in Point Marion Community Park at 10 a.m. on Saturday, April 25, to recognize Point Marion as a “Trail Town” along the Sheepskin Rail-Trail. The Sheepskin Rail-Trail will eventually connect to Uniontown and Dunbar and then link with the GAP trail near Connellsville, Pennsylvania.

For details, contact Point Marion Councilwoman Vicky Evans at 304.282.4276.

Rails-to-Trails Conservancy (RTC), a nonprofit organization with more than 160,000 members and supporters, is America’s largest trails organization dedicated to connecting people and communities by creating a nationwide network of public trails, many from former rail lines. Founded in 1986, RTC’s national office is located in Washington, D.C., with regional offices in California, Florida, Ohio and Pennsylvania. For more information, visit railstotrails.org.

The Mon River Trails Conservancy (MRTC), a non-profit organization, manages and maintains 40 of the 48-miles that make up the Mon River and Deckers Creek rail-trails outside of Morgantown and Star City. MRTC also works with Morgantown’s Board of Park and Recreation Commissioners and Star City to promote and maintain the eight miles of the Mon River and Deckers Creek rail-trails that are within city limits.

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