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Rails-to-Trails Conservancy Names Unsung Railbanking Hero 2018 Doppelt Family Rail-Trail Champion

On 50th Anniversary of National Trails System Act, Bethesda, Maryland, resident honored for writing the 1983 Railbanking Act and creating the legal foundation for thousands of rail-trails nationwide

WASHINGTON—On the 50th Anniversary of the National Trails System Act, Rails-to-Trails Conservancy (RTC) today named Peter Raynor, a local Bethesda, Maryland, resident, the 2018 Doppelt Family Rail-Trail Champion for his role in writing the 1983 Railbanking Act—two short sentences that laid the legal foundation for the entire rail-trail movement.

“When Pete Raynor was a young staff attorney at the National Park Service 35 years ago, the enormity of the language he had written was unknown,” said Keith Laughlin, president of RTC. “In just a few simple, powerful sentences Pete crafted the legal framework to preserve the nation’s railroad corridors. In doing so, he set the precedent for thousands of rail-trails across the country. Those sentences pioneered a movement.”

The author of the railbanking statute had been little known until now, when Raynor, at 76 years old, was honored for his work at a Rail-Trail Champion ceremony on the Capital Crescent Trail in Bethesda on Oct. 2. Leadership from across the trail and active transportation community celebrated Raynor, including Laughlin; Mike Riley, director of Montgomery Parks; Peter Harnik, co-founder of RTC and the Coalition for the Capital Crescent Trail; Kevin Brandt, superintendent for the Chesapeake & Ohio Canal National Historical Park; and Tim Petri, former congressman from Wisconsin and member of RTC’s board.

The group held up Raynor’s creativity in crafting what he called a “good little law,” legislation simple in its intent but with incredible impact to allow disused rail corridors to be “banked” for future transportation use through interim use as trails. To date, more than 4,200 miles of trail—nearly 20 percent of the country’s rail-trails—have been railbanked, including some of the nation’s most well-known trails, the Sauk Rail Trail in Iowa, which filed for railbanking in 1985 and the Katy Trail State Park in Missouri, which filed for railbanking in 1986. The Capital Crescent Trail, where Raynor’s ceremony was held, was railbanked in two parts in Maryland and Washington, D.C., in 1988 and 1990 respectively.

Despite the sweeping impact of his work, Raynor remains modest about his contribution.

“Many people helped implement it [the law]. I just wrote it,” said Raynor in the Fall 2018 issue of *Rails to Trails* magazine. “This is a wonderful honor, not just for me, but for the entire environmental movement.”

In honor of his achievements, RTC made a gift in Raynor's name to Baltimore's Parks and People Foundation in support of the Middle Branch Trail Trestle. Spanning the Patapsco River, the bridge will ultimately connect the new Port Covington development site with several south Baltimore neighborhoods. The CSX railroad bridge is an important segment in a citywide partnership focused on investments that bring direct value to communities.

Since 2011, the Doppelt Family Rail-Trail Champions Award has honored more than 30 individuals who have made significant contributions to the rail-trail movement through their hard work, volunteerism and support—in short, those who have gone above and beyond in the name of trails.

For more information on the history of railbanking, visit railstotrails.org/railbanking.

Rails-to-Trails Conservancy is the nation's largest trails organization—with a grassroots community more than 1 million strong—dedicated to connecting people and communities by creating a nationwide network of public trails, many from former rail lines. Connect with RTC at railstotrails.org and [@railstotrails](#) on [Facebook](#), [Twitter](#) and [Instagram](#).