

Westmoreland Yough Trail Chapter



Trail Tales

The Yearly Newsletter of the WYTC 2025 Year in Review

A Message from the President Karen Craig

A huge compliment conveyed by many trail users, including bikers from all over the world, is that the Westmoreland Yough Trail Chapter (WYTC) 10.5-mile section of the Great Allegheny Passage is beautifully kept and one of the better sections of the trail. The WYTC is an all-volunteer organization, and this comment is a direct reflection of all the committed people who support our non-profit organization in many ways.

Help us grow! If you aren't already, become a member. If you're already a member make sure to renew your membership. Attend our monthly meetings to learn more about the WYTC.

Membership dues are used to support trail maintenance. An added benefit of membership is the organized bicycling group. Read more about the group later in this newsletter.

Volunteer or participate in our fundraising events. Enjoy the camaraderie and fun while helping to raise funds for a beloved community asset.

Consider making donations to support our efforts. Every dollar counts and helps to procure maintenance supplies and equipment.

Please join us, you really can make a difference.

WYTC 2026 Board of Directors

Officers

President – Karen Craig

Vice President – Becky Nichols

Treasurer – Diane Heming

Secretary – Mary Reid

At Large Directors

Robert Hand

Jim Logan

Donna Morrison

2026 Calendar of Events

Mark your calendars for the following upcoming events. Check the website for more information closer to the event.

June 7 - Trail Appreciation Day

Sept 7 - Annual Labor Day Poker Run

Please renew your membership using the new online system at our website bikewytc.org. You can pay with a credit card or mail in a check to cover your dues. We are no longer accepting paper renewals and are sorry for any inconvenience. Read about this new system in an article later in this newsletter.

Your membership dues help to purchase supplies and equipment to support the work of our volunteers who maintain the trail. Your continued support is greatly appreciated and critical to the success of the WYTC.

Memberships expire on April 30 of each year.

2025 Over the Hill Gang Maintenance Report

Submitted by Bob Hand

Over The Hill Gang (OTHG) activities slowed down over the winter months of 2025. A few volunteers continued to plow snow at the West Newton Visitor Station, remove fallen trees on the trail, and perform preventive equipment maintenance throughout the early months of the year. By the time weekly Wednesday work parties restarted in late April, the framework for a carport placed behind the maintenance building had been erected. A John Deere Deisel powered zero-turn mower was delivered in February. That mower was purchased with the help of a donation from the Mabis McKenna Foundation and with membership dues and donations. The zero-turn mower allows for more efficient and safe mowing around structures and trees, especially in locations like the West Newton Station.

In addition to routine chores like grass cutting, weed whacking, tree removal and trail patching, the OTHG completed several major repair and improvement projects along the WYTC section of the Great Allegheny Passage. Using our excavator and new attachments, the primary drainage ditch alongside the trail was thoroughly cleaned and a bench created between the ditch and the trail was established. During this first year of work about a quarter mile of the ditch has been remediated. This effort will continue in 2026 and beyond.



John Deere Zero-Turn Mower purchased in 2025.



Rostraver Township assists with tree removal.

The entire trail section surface was cleaned and groomed in March.

Due to extensive rainfall in early April our Wednesday maintenance work parties did not begin until late April. Those heavy rains caused many trees to fall including the very large one pictured to the left. The Rostraver Township Maintenance crew assisted with the removal of that tree by supplying a large front loader and a large chain saw.



Pictured at left are volunteers from the Kenny Ross Subaru Dealership in Irwin who painted the wooden fence at the King Trailhead Parking Lot in West Newton in May. The finished project is at far left.

2025 Over the Hill Gang Maintenance Report - Continued

Another major project was the installation of about 300 feet of wooden fencing along the Yough Riverbank near West Newton. The upright posts were installed by a contractor and the OTHG installed the cross rails. This project was also supported by the Mabis McKenna Foundation and membership contributions. The fence provides a safety barrier for all trail users.

In collaboration with the King Family a new metal fence was installed on the edge of a gully near the West Newton Cemetery help provide a safer environment in that area.

The Regional Trail Corporation had a section of the trail surface at the West Newton Station paved with asphalt. The OTHG assisted with traffic control during the paving and remediated the edges of the asphalt with topsoil and grass seeding.



The Over The Hill Gang puts final touches on new asphalt near the West Newton Station.

The remainder of the summer of 2025 was spent on these routine tasks as well as others that need completed every year.

- clipping overhead vegetation
- cutting vegetation alongside the trail
- blowing leaves from the trail
- cleaning the River Overlook Deck and the Brick Memorial
- spraying Knotweed

In December the Over The Hill Gang met for its annual planning meeting. The meeting resulted in plans to complete several improvement projects along the trail in 2026. These plans include:

- Safety fences at the I70 Bridge and near GAP mileposts 110.5 and 116.
- Renovation of the deck on the Cedar Creek Bridge.
- Installation of drainage in the West Newton Cemetery area.
- Repair of the five information kiosks along the trail.
- Renovations to the Brick Memorial Pavilion.
- Landscaping at the King Trailhead in West Newton.

Follow the Westmoreland Yough Trail Chapter on Facebook. Check out www.bikewytc.org, the WYTC website, for photos of events and of the trail. Follow instructions on the website if you want to have your photos included. The website is also where you go to become a member or to donate.

The WYTC Goes Paperless

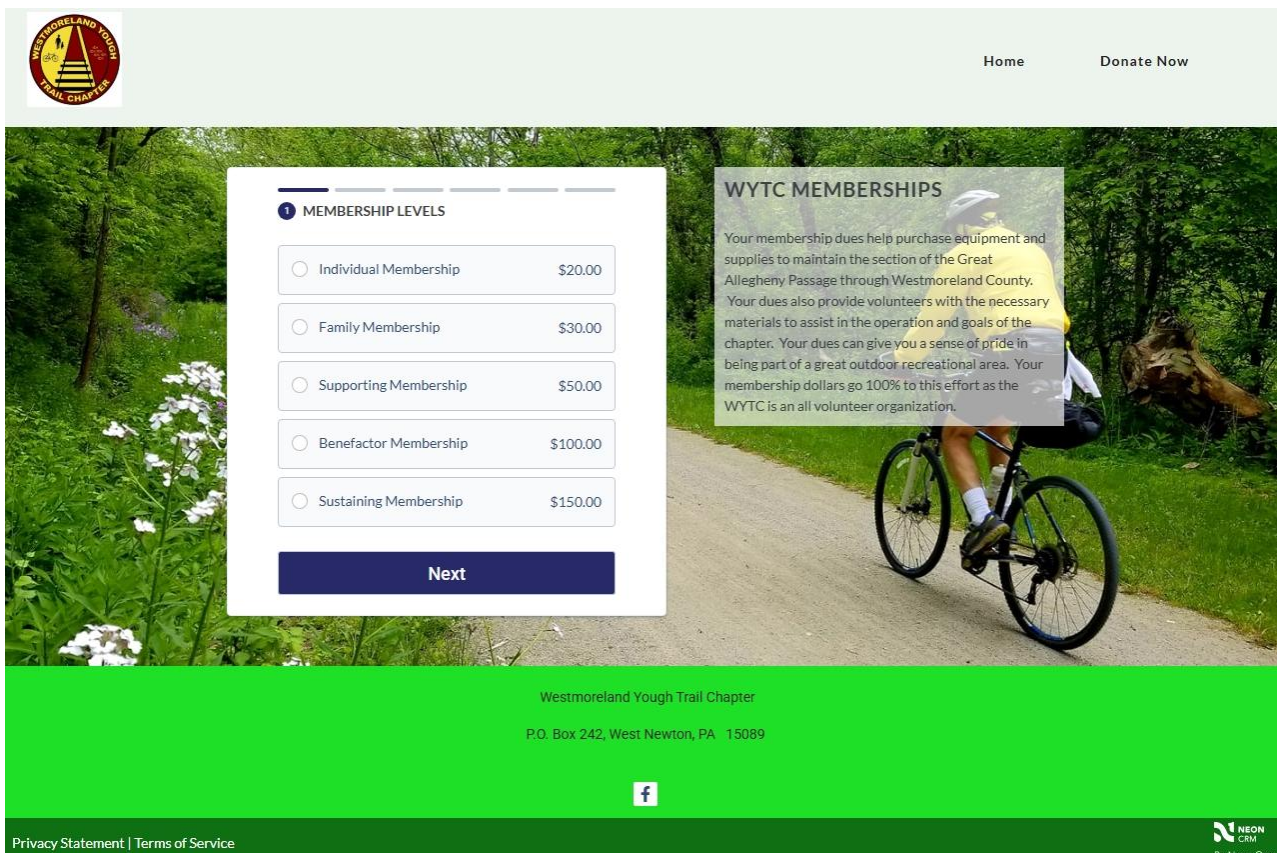
By Becky Nichols

With the increase in costs for postage, paper and ink as well as other printing costs the WYTC needed to do something to lower these costs. Also, previously the membership information was maintained in an Excel spreadsheet which was housed on the membership chair's personal computer. This left the WYTC with a concern about the safety of the membership information. What if something happened to that PC? How would we recover our membership information if the chair didn't have a copy of the information at another location? It was becoming more and more tedious to keep the email system updated with current email addresses to be able to send out messages about meetings and upcoming events. In addition, it has become more and more difficult to find volunteers to help with all the tasks of keeping the information updated and current and communicating with our membership.

As a result of these concerns the Westmoreland Yough Trail Chapter (WYTC) decided to implement an online membership management system. The new system is maintained in the cloud and backed up by the vendor. Access to the information can now be more easily accessed by more than one person to help with various tasks.

When you renew your membership or make a donation the system will now automatically send you an email as confirmation of your transaction. This email acts as your receipt for possible tax purposes and thanks you for your support of the WYTC.

Instead of filling out a paper form and mailing it you can now go online and enter all your information directly into the system. This helps eliminate the need for a volunteer to do this task. You can also now pay your dues or make your donation with your credit card. However, if you're still not comfortable doing financial transactions on the Internet, you can select to mail in a check after entering your information.



The screenshot shows the beginning of the WYTC membership form. At the top left is the WYTC logo, a circular emblem with a mountain and the text 'WESTMORELAND YOUGH TRAIL CHAPTER'. To the right are links for 'Home' and 'Donate Now'. The main content area features a background image of a person cycling on a trail. Overlaid on this is a form titled '1 MEMBERSHIP LEVELS'. The form lists five membership options, each with a radio button and a price: Individual Membership (\$20.00), Family Membership (\$30.00), Supporting Membership (\$50.00), Benefactor Membership (\$100.00), and Sustaining Membership (\$150.00). A 'Next' button is at the bottom of the form. To the right of the form is a text box titled 'WYTC MEMBERSHIPS' containing a paragraph about the benefits of membership. At the bottom of the page is a green footer bar with the text 'Westmoreland Yough Trail Chapter', 'P.O. Box 242, West Newton, PA 15089', a Facebook icon, and a 'Privacy Statement | Terms of Service' link. On the far right of the footer is the 'NEON CRM' logo.

1 MEMBERSHIP LEVELS	
<input type="radio"/> Individual Membership	\$20.00
<input type="radio"/> Family Membership	\$30.00
<input type="radio"/> Supporting Membership	\$50.00
<input type="radio"/> Benefactor Membership	\$100.00
<input type="radio"/> Sustaining Membership	\$150.00

Next

WYTC MEMBERSHIPS

Your membership dues help purchase equipment and supplies to maintain the section of the Great Allegheny Passage through Westmoreland County. Your dues also provide volunteers with the necessary materials to assist in the operation and goals of the chapter. Your dues can give you a sense of pride in being part of a great outdoor recreational area. Your membership dollars go 100% to this effort as the WYTC is an all volunteer organization.

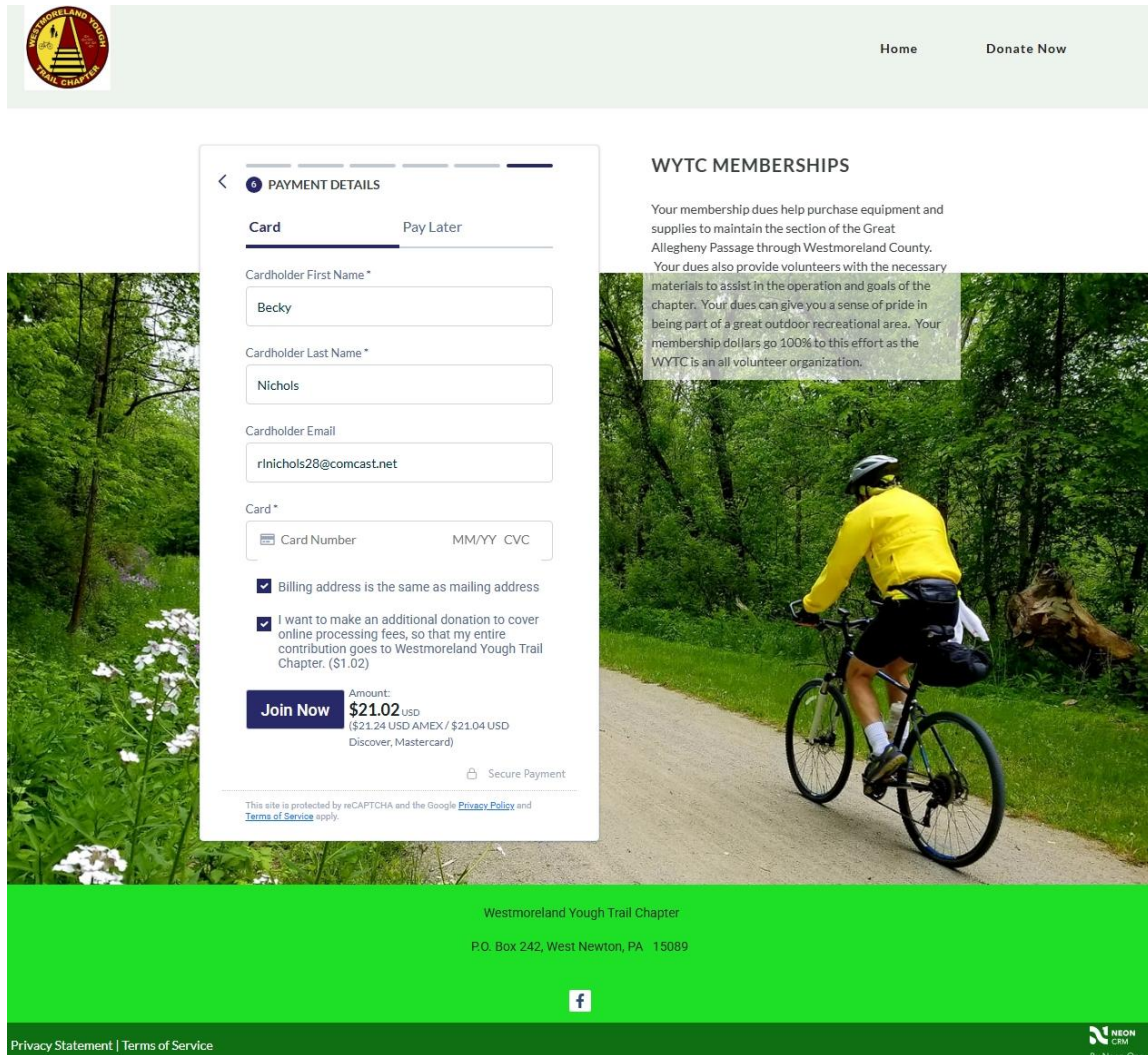
Westmoreland Yough Trail Chapter
P.O. Box 242, West Newton, PA 15089

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NEON CRM
By Neuron One

Screen Snapshot of the beginning of the Membership Form in the new system

You have two options to pay or donate, credit card or mail in a check. If you're paying with a credit card you have the option to cover the credit card processing costs or have the WYTC pay them. Screen shots of both options to pay are shown below.

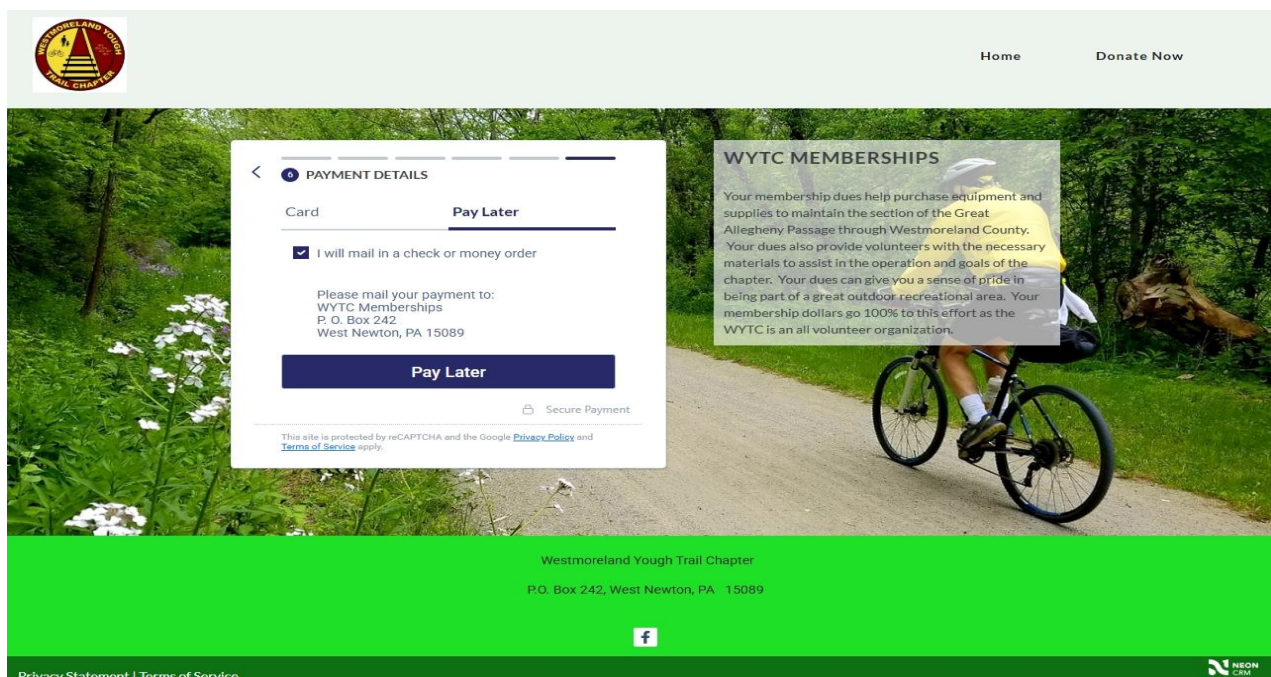


The screenshot shows the 'PAYMENT DETAILS' form for credit card payment. The form includes fields for Cardholder First Name (Becky), Cardholder Last Name (Nichols), Cardholder Email (rlnichols28@comcast.net), and Card Number (MM/YY CVC). There are checkboxes for 'Billing address is the same as mailing address' and 'I want to make an additional donation to cover online processing fees, so that my entire contribution goes to Westmoreland Yough Trail Chapter. (\$1.02)'. The 'Join Now' button shows an amount of \$21.02 USD (\$21.24 USD AMEX / \$21.04 USD Discover, Mastercard). The background features a cyclist on a path and a 'WYTC MEMBERSHIPS' text box.

Westmoreland Yough Trail Chapter
P.O. Box 242, West Newton, PA 15089

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Screen snapshot above if you pay with a credit card. Note the option to help out with the additional costs of using a credit card. Below is a screen snapshot if you want to send in a check. Note that the address is displayed for you.



The screenshot shows the 'PAYMENT DETAILS' form for check payment. The form includes a checkbox for 'I will mail in a check or money order'. Below this, it displays the mailing address: 'Please mail your payment to: WYTC Memberships, P.O. Box 242, West Newton, PA 15089'. The 'Pay Later' button is visible. The background features a cyclist on a path and a 'WYTC MEMBERSHIPS' text box.

Westmoreland Yough Trail Chapter
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This is the screen that you will see first when you make a donation to the WYTC.

The donation section functions much the same way as the membership section. You select the amount that you want to donate and then click Next. You would then fill out your information; name, address, phone and email address. The next screen then allows you to select whether to pay with a credit card or to send in a check similar to the above screens from the membership section. You can also specify if you want your donation to go to a particular area. Just like in the membership section of the system, you will automatically receive an email including your transaction information that you can use for tax purposes if appropriate. This email is also your receipt.

The new system also makes it easier to communicate with our members. You may have already noticed that you will get an email message about upcoming meetings as well as requests to volunteer for various events. Some of these are fundraising events so if you can volunteer to help out it will make a difference to the WYTC.

The WYTC hopes that you find the new system user friendly and easy to use. It has already made many of our volunteers lives easier. Thank you for your continued support of the WYTC.

Money is not the only commodity that is fun to give. We can give time, we can give our expertise, we can give our love or simply give a smile. What does that cost? The point is none of us can ever run out of something worthwhile to give. – Steve Goodier



Yough River Trail Riders

By Bill Hurrianko

Since 2009 organized bike rides have been held on Monday, Tuesday and Thursday, usually for a round-trip distance of about 30 miles. Monday and Thursday rides begin at the West Newton Station while Tuesday rides may start at other locations. Examples of the start of Tuesday rides are Whitsett, Connellsville, Ohionyle, Confluence or McKeesport. Some rides may go all the way into Pittsburgh for a special day on the trail.

Please note that all riders must be members of the Westmoreland Yough Trail Chapter, the all-volunteer group that maintains the 10.5 miles of trail that runs through Westmoreland County. If you're not a member yet you can easily become one and enjoy the trail with other members. If you're already a member, don't forget to renew your membership.

The riders enjoy staying in touch during the off season by meeting for lunch at regular monthly get togethers. The riding season normally wraps up with a holiday dinner at a local restaurant which is enjoyed by all.

The riding season usually begins in April depending on the condition of the trail. If you're interested, join us on a Monday or Thursday at 10:00 at the West Newton Visitor Center. If you have questions, contact Bill Hurrianko, ride coordinator, at youghbikers@comcast.net.

2025 Corporate Sponsors

The following businesses have generously supported the Westmoreland Yough Trail Chapter. Please show your appreciation by patronizing them in return. Thank you!

Belle Vernon Rotary Club

Kenny Ross – Subaru

The Embroidery People

The Trailside

Warhold Mechanical

West Newton Bicycle Shop

West Newton Animal Clinic

Bloom Brew

West Newton Pizza House

Borough of Smithton

GAP Trail Campground, LLC

Williams ACE Hardware – West Newton

Highway Appliance

JPK Construction, LLC

L.L. Barthels Funeral Home Inc

Letterio Distributing

NovaCare Rehabilitation – West Newton