

The 2018 maintenance season started with the reinstallation of the gates, posts, and safety bollards that were removed in 2017 to allow for the resurfacing of the WYTC section of the trail. New gates and new wooden posts were installed, and new safety bollards installed where they had yet to be placed. That considerable chore was made easier by using an auger attachment for our mini-excavator. All the gates, etc. between Collinsburg and Whittsett were replaced.

No sooner was the gate project done when the rains started. The excessive rainfall caused many minor and two major landslides either onto the trail or into drainage ditches. One slide was on the riverbank near the Allegheny County line which required a special PADEP permit and substantial funding to complete. Through a grant from the Katherine Mabis McKenna Foundation approximately 2 miles of drainage ditch was cleaned. The river side landslide was completed with WYTC funds. The WYTC mini-excavator was used extensively to clean drainage ditches making use of a new 36-inch ditching bucket. The heavy rains caused erosion of the surface of the trail in several places, not once, but several times. Repair work to eroded areas continued until late November and will continue in 2019.

In late October and into November we obtained used utility poles from the West Penn Power training facility near Jeannette, PA where a WYTC member, Scott Shoff, is a lineman trainer. All the troublesome post and rail fencing at the Smithton trailhead was replaced with the utility poles. They act as a barrier to access to the trail by motorized vehicles and will require little maintenance.

An Eagle Scout prospect, Ryan Patricio, started the renovation of a P&LE railroad signal light near Buddtown. He will complete the project in the spring of 2019. One amenity added to the WYTC section in 2018 was a Fixit bike repair station near the West Newton Station. Another was the installation of two measured mile markers between Buddtown and Collinsburg (near P&LE mileposts 32 and 34) which can be used for accurate calibration of bicycle odometers. Funding for the Fixit Station was through the Allegheny Trail Alliance (ATA) in honor of ATA founder Linda Boxx. The measured miles were precisely measured by Senate Engineering using sophisticated distance measurement equipment with funding through her foundation, the Katherine Mabis McKenna Foundation.

Major new equipment purchases in 2018 were the auger, brush cutter and ditching bucket attachments for the excavator. They add needed flexibility for the various work that must be done. Altogether, the cost of maintenance equipment, supplies, equipment repairs, maintenance building utilities, and excavating contractors was in excess of \$50,000 for the year. Thanks to all the grant organizations, the corporate sponsors, registrants at our fundraising events, members and other donors who helped to fund the WYTC maintenance efforts. Our goal is to have a well maintained trail that will be attractive to users seeking a good recreational experience and will help the local economy through the dollars those users spend in local businesses.

Thanks to every one of the Over the Hill Gang maintenance crew for their time, efforts and dedication to our work. We are consistently recognized as the best maintained section of the trail.