



A Lancaster County Gem

Conewago Trail

By Randall Orris, Trail User

"The new rail trail improvements were like being in heaven. During this time period the trail grew in popularity."



My wife and I live approximately six miles from the Rt. 230 Trailhead of the Conewago Nature Trail, which is my typical jumping-off point. It is a shared use trail, used by hikers, bird watchers, equestrians, women with baby strollers, and bike riders. For the safety of trail users, motorized vehicles are prohibited.

The trail is safe and has considerable activity on weekends, especially during the spring and summer months. The trail is well maintained. The trail traverses woods and farm fields, and there are a few horse farms just off the trail. Over the years, I've made many friends on the trail.

I first discovered the trail thanks to neighborhood friends; it was a place where we would walk our dogs. In those early days (1990s) I had a Yellow Lab, named Bart who



Keystone Fund Investment: \$416,800

Total Public/Private Investment: \$1.07 million

enjoyed several swimming holes along Conewago Creek. At first my friends and I would only hike about two miles of the trail and never ventured past Rt. 743. As time went on Bart and I hiked past Rt. 743 and up to Belair Road for an eight-mile round trip.

Bart never complained and always enjoyed these hikes and the opportunity to swim.

Sadly, like all pets, Bart passed on. Around that same time period I traded in my hiking shoes for a mountain bike. Originally the trail was packed dirt, mud-holes, and rough stone, the remains of the old ballast from the railroad.

At first I rode the trail from Rt. 230 to Rt. 743 for a five-mile roundtrip. My wife would join me in those early short rides. Eventually I rode past Rt. 743 to where the trail ends at

the Lebanon County Line. This gave me a round trip of 10 miles. I would ride the trail every opportunity after work and on weekends. It was great way to stay fit and clear my mind after a day at work.

At some point, Lancaster County developed the trail as a rail trail with a crushed cinder base. Many of the drainage problems were fixed. The new trail improvements were like being in heaven. During this time period the trail grew in popularity.

A great benefit of the Conewago Nature Trail is that it merges with the Lebanon Valley Rail Trail at the County Line. The LVRT presently takes you to Lebanon City with plans to eventually go to Swatara State Park. During the weekends I enjoy longer rides starting at the Rt. 230 trailhead and continuing on to Cornwall. This gives me a roundtrip ride of 31 miles.

Some of the wildlife you may encounter on the trail include squirrels; a variety of birds like geese, hawks, and turkey vultures; plus chipmunks, deer, weasels, and muskrats. Most recently the trail has been visited by a black bear, but this is rare.

I continue to enjoy the trail to this day and make use of the trail 12 months out of the year.

I have learned a lot about trail etiquette and I'd like to share some tips: when using the trail please be cognizant that the trail is a shared-use trail. The trail is frequently used by equestrians, and horses have the right of way from both hikers and mountain bikers. In addition, when passing horses, hikers, or other bikers, typically pass on your left and always announce your intentions when passing by saying "on your left."

Happy trails to you!