

Rail-Trail Council of Northeastern Pennsylvania

Phone: (570) 785-7245

Project Manager: Lynn Conrad

Grant Award: \$60,000

Delaware & Hudson (D&H) Rail-Trail Improvement project began the implementation of the D&H Master Trail Development Plan by designing and planting key areas of the 32-mile, multipurpose trail. Plantings were concentrated in three small communities where past mining and railroad activities left scarred landscapes. The plantings improved the first trailhead, and two major access points of the trail, restored blighted lands into usable community space, and established an identity for the entire trail.

The highly visible Simpson Trailhead located at the southernmost terminus of the trail in Lackawanna County was a site of improvements. The trailhead was transformed from an unclaimed urban parking and dumping area to an attractive trailhead with native canopy and flowering trees and shrubs, trail signage, gardens, and river views.

The Forest City Railbed was once infested with Japanese knotweed and a primary access point for unauthorized vehicles. This site was developed into a trail-side park with native trees and shrubs, post and rail fencing, a trail-access footpath, and defined parking.

The Thompson Railbed, located 30-miles north of the Simpson Trailhead, was primarily used as a driveway for local residents. It was so overgrown with vegetation that an adjacent historic cemetery was obscured from view. The trail was separated from the cemetery by a wildflower planting with a row of native flowering trees. Both entrances to this section of the trail were enhanced with beds of native shrubs and herbaceous material and a pedestrian pathway.

The Trail Improvement project fulfilled its objectives to clean-up the rail bed, adjacent riverbanks, and nearby degraded woodlands. The project encouraged stewardship among trail users and local residents while enhancing the trail experience for everyone. The work has resulted in increased trail use by walkers who feel safer entering the trail. It has boosted pride in the community, served as a catalyst for neighborhood volunteerism, discouraged dumping, and increased the visibility of the Rail-Trail Council's work.

Project Value and Match

Grant Award	\$60,000
Cash Contributions	\$23,975
In-kind Contributions	\$33,486
Total Project Cost	\$117,461



Project Accomplishments

- Planted 17 canopy trees, 20 evergreen trees, 100 evergreen seedlings, 54 flowering trees, 363 shrubs, and 245 herbaceous plants
- Improved 3.5-acres of rail corridor.
- Planted 2,560-l.ft. of degraded woodland edge.
- Cleaned-up and planted 1,060-l.ft. of land adjacent to the Lackawanna River (within 100' from top of bank along railbed right-of-way).
- Eradicated approximately 3,500-sq.ft. of Japanese knotweed.
- Improved 1,480-l.ft. of trail at one trailhead and two major access points.
- Implemented recommendations made in the D&H Master Trail Plan.
- Supported 7 regional and local planning initiatives.
- Created 3 community trail-side parks.
- Boosted community pride in the trail and encouraged stewardship along the trail corridor.
- Constructed and installed the first trailhead sign.
- Held a National Trail Day celebration at Simpson Trailhead and was nationally recognized for this event by the American Hiking Society and DuPont Cordura in Salt Lake City.
- Worked with 95 local neighbors, Boy Scouts, Friends of the Trail, and Rail Trail Council members who committed 1,531 hours of service.
- Supported the award of \$22,760 in a Willary Foundation grant for trail amenities.
- Achieved a 1 to .93 cost share ratio for the grant.

Partners' Contributions

- Agrotech Landscaping – Watering of Simpson Trailhead plants
- All-Over ATV Club – Trail and riverbank cleanup
- Boy Scout Troops (#312 & Simpson) – Brush removal
- Curtis Valley Horticultural Services – Service donations
- Fell Renaissance Committee – Historical hike and cleanup
- Fell Township – Dump truck, firemen, police, cleanup
- Forest City Borough – Hand tools and mulch delivery
- Friends of the Trail Volunteers – Cleanup and maintenance
- Gentex Corporation – Sign donation
- Lackawanna Heritage Valley Authority – Technical assistance
- Lackawanna River Corridor Association – Cleanup
- Linde Enterprises – Mine stone for trailhead fill
- NE PA Snow Trails – Trail cleanup
- N. Tier Regional Planning Commission – Financial support
- PennDOT District 4-0 – Trash removal for all cleanups
- Simpson Lions Club – Additional plantings on Borough land
- State Correctional Institute Waymart – Brush removal
- Summer Youth Service Corps (SYSC) – Summer workers
- TreeHab Center – Coordinated SYSC workers
- Thompson Borough – Brush removal, watering, cleanup
- Tuzzi Trucking – 30 loads of fill for the trail base

