



FACT SHEET

Mon River Trails Conservancy Fund



About the Fund

From the late 1880s until well into the 20th Century, some of the region's busiest highways were the railroad lines that carried coal and coke, glass, sand, limestone and other resources from North Central West Virginia to markets around the United States. Today, the legacy of early coal mining, quarrying and railroading has been relegated to local museums and antique shops, while the route those goods traveled is now serving a new purpose as the Mon River/Caperton/Deckers Creek Trail System.

Purchased from CSX Railroad in 1996, the one-time railroad corridor is now managed by the Mon River Trails Conservancy (MRTC) for public, non-motorized recreation including bicycling, walking, jogging, in-line skating and cross-country skiing. An endowment fund managed by Your Community Foundation helps to support MRTC, with net income from the fund applied toward maintenance and development of the trails. "We are working with MTRC to build a fund that will help support the conservancy's mission long into the future," says YCF President Beth Fuller. "This is important because MRTC is a non-profit 501(c)3 volunteer organization and it costs a lot of money to manage roughly 50 miles of trail."

A rail-trail is essentially a long, linear park that creates opportunities for recreation, alternative transportation, tourism, economic development, historic preservation, healthy lifestyles and environmental conservation, says Ella Belling, MRTC executive director. "Rail-trails also serve as wildlife conservation corridors, linking isolated parks and creating greenways through developed areas," she says. "Through innovative collaboration with community partners, government officials and a diverse corps of volunteers, these trail corridors are being transformed from industrial wastelands into national examples of economic and environmental renewal."

To date, more than \$2 million in Transportation Enhancement and Recreational Trail funds have been invested in the purchase and construction of this trail system. These funds have been augmented by business and community donations, but upkeep is costly, and MRTC continues to seek donations to help cover the maintenance cost of the trail system. "The most difficult challenge we face is the need for capital investment in the long-term costs of the rail-trail," Ella says. "It costs \$7,600 per mile for resurfacing outside of city limits, while asphalt resurfacing costs \$60,000 per mile, she said.

MRTC sponsors the Deckers Creek Trail Half Marathon held each year in early June and is undertaking a number of trail amenity projects, including restoration of the historic Elkins Coal and Coke Building in Masontown and the addition of a shelter near Little Falls in Monongalia County.

Information: <http://www.montrails.org>.

How Can I Donate?

All donations to the fund are invested to increase their value, with net income from these investments paid out annually to meet the requirements and donor objectives of the fund. While the net income is dispersed, the original endowments and any subsequent contributions remain intact and continue to grow from year to year.

Individuals, organizations and businesses are encouraged to contribute any amount of money to one or more of the endowments managed by YCF. Additional donations will help the endowments to grow over the years and will increase the net income used to provide yearly grants.

To make a donation, or to get more information, contact Your Community Foundation, P.O. Box 409, Morgantown, WV 26507. Call us at (304) 296-3433 or visit our web site at www.ycfwv.org.