

September 26, 2010

Surface Transportation Board
395 E Street, SW
Washington, DC 20423

ATT: Danielle Gosselin
Section of Environmental Analysis
Environmental Filing FD 35116

Dear Ms. Gosselin:

As a regular hiker/trail maintainer and volunteer for the nearby Black Moshannon State Park, I adamantly oppose the reactivation of the rail line in Centre and Clearfield Counties.

The trains will not only help transform scenic vistas into trash vistas but will actually "follow" the hiker for about 3 miles along the Red Moshannon Creek.

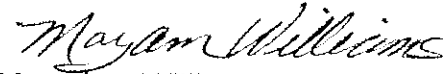
Central Pennsylvania is home to the 41-mile long *Allegheny Front Trail*, which regularly attracts many area hikers as well as out of state hikers. The trail (encircling Black Moshannon State Park) has awesome features, one of which is the historic 103 foot-high Peale Viaduct, which the train plans to traverse. The AFT follows a remote section of the Red Moshannon Creek for about 3 miles, which the rail line also plans to follow. Conceivably, a hiker, a kayaker, and a mountain biker could simultaneously encounter each other along the same section of wilderness. Therefore, all wilderness recreational opportunities would be severely impacted by the site, noise, offensive odors and potential accidental derailments.

Another major negative impact for transporting trash by rail is the 40+-year-old *Red Moshannon Canoe Race*, which annually attracts over 200 entrants, locally and out of state. The race begins about one-mile downstream from the planned landfill site – the train's destination. (See note at end of this letter on race history.)

Also, the most obvious and insidious recreational loss would be the well-established, grant-funded Snow Shoe Rail Trail. The rail line would destroy 9 miles of exceptional historic and remote beauty, including the historic Peale Viaduct and Tunnel. (See *Snow Shoe Rails to Trails Association*)

In conclusion, please consider these many negative environmental impacts, present and future, in the Final EIS, and do not grant reactivation of the rail line. Toxic, track-hauled trash into our precious wild recreational areas is a disaster to the land and its citizens.

Sincerely,



Mary Ann Williams

cc:

People Protecting Communities

Keystone Trails Association

Ridge & Valley Outing Club

Snow Shoe Rails to Trails Association

Tussey Mountain Outfitters

Enc:

Section of Ben Cramer's Book on the *Allegheny Front Trail*

Pages 5, 8 & 9

Red Moshannon Downriver Race

This race is held in the Spring on a remote 7.5 mile section of Moshannon Creek. It starts at Peale Bridge near the town of Grassflat PA, and ends at the Route 53 Bridge near the town of Moshannon PA. At moderate levels, this section is rated Class II+.

There are classes for solo and tandem open canoes, kayaks, and decked canoes. Racers can also participate in the "poker race" by picking up cards along the race course - the best hand wins.

Race History

The Red Mo Race was begun in 1967. The Penn State Outing Club Canoe Division ran the race from 1967 to 1980. There was no race in 1976. The 1981 race was jointly sponsored by PSOC and Tussey Mountain Outfitters. TMO has run the race since 1982. Boat classes have varied over the years and the race history reflects the awards made in each year.



HIKING THE ALLEGHENY FRONT TRAIL

Introduction

The Allegheny Front Trail (AFT) is a 41.75 mile-long loop trail in Moshannon State Forest in western Centre County, Pennsylvania, that roughly circles Black Moshannon State Park. Except for the short distance within the state park boundaries, the entire length of the AFT is within the state forest. The nearest town is Philipsburg, about 8 miles to the west, and State College and Penn State University are about 20 miles to the southeast.

At the time of writing, the AFT has its own website featuring photos, maps, and a history of the trail. Visit the AFT site at: <http://alleghenyfronttrail.info>. The website is especially useful for up-to-date information on trail conditions and other matters of interest to hikers. The AFT is maintained and supervised by the Quehanna Area Trails Club (QATC), which can be reached by mail at 882 Rollingstone Road, Morrisdale, PA, 16858-8908.

Day Hikes and Backpacking Trips

Thanks to its loop layout and many access points, the Allegheny Front Trail is great for both day hikes and extended backpacking trips. For the planning of hikes, this guide describes the entire AFT loop in a clockwise fashion, starting at the parking lot shared with the Rock Run Trails System (see the *Logistics* chapter below for details).

Both the starting point and direction of the measurements in this guide were completely arbitrary decisions. The hiker can start where desired, and can hike in either direction. Just note that when hiking the AFT loop in a counter-clockwise direction, all features will be "mirror images" of those described in this guide. For example, uphill becomes downhill, left turns become right turns, and the like. Also, there is no need to feel constrained by the four "sections" of the trail denoted in this guide, which were also created arbitrarily for readability and planning purposes. Day hikers are also encouraged to start at a point of their choosing and conduct a two-way "in and out" hike, in which you would hike for a certain distance away from your car and then turn around and hike back. Hikers are often surprised by how much scenery they can miss by following a trail in only one direction.

The adjacent Shingle Mill Trail, a very scenic footpath that follows Black Moshannon Creek north from Black Moshannon State Park and joins the northern section of the AFT, is also featured in this guide. The Shingle Mill Trail can be utilized for longer backpacking trips, and should also be considered for enjoyable day hikes as well.

The AFT is one of the most accessible trails in Pennsylvania for extended backpacking trips. Beginners who are considering taking their first serious backpacking trip should consider the wonders and convenience of the AFT. For starters, the AFT is never significantly removed from a road, including the paved Rattlesnake Pike (PA Route 504) and Julian Pike (also known as Beaver Road). The AFT is not especially rugged, except for the rocky sections along the edge of the Allegheny Front in the southeastern portion of the trail. There are also few significant climbs along the AFT, except for the extended climb away from Moshannon Creek in the northwestern corner of the trail, and some intermediate climbs away from Six Mile Run and Benner Run. Otherwise, the AFT mostly features gentle terrain, and makes up for its lack of ruggedness with delightful scenery and aesthetic variety.

near railroad tracks reactivation area

Experienced backpackers may be able to complete the entire AFT in four days or less. Beginners, or those who prefer a more relaxed pace,

can expect to complete the trail in four to six days. In all cases, planning such a trip on the AFT is easy, thanks to its many access points and easily-located campsite possibilities.

Camping

Since most of the AFT is in Moshannon State Forest, and water sources are conveniently located near most portions of the trail, primitive backpacking along the AFT is fairly easy and always pleasant. Some areas of the trail are easily reached by car, so the backpacker could park at one of the many access points and hike a short distance along the trail to a camping spot.

In Moshannon State Forest, statewide camping rules apply. According to the Pennsylvania Department of Conservation and Natural Resources (DCNR), which manages the State Forests, camping is separated into three categories: primitive camping, car camping, and group camping. There are no officially designated car campsites along the trail, so anyone who parks nearby for convenience, and backpacks a short distance, is also considered a "primitive" camper.

For most backpackers, the rules for primitive camping will apply. Pennsylvania utilizes camping permits, which are mostly used for recordkeeping and safety purposes, and are free of charge at the time of this writing. Also at the time of writing, primitive backpackers are not required to apply for a camping permit for Moshannon State Forest, except if one or more of the following conditions applies:

- An emergency point of contact is desired.
- You plan to stay at the same site for more than one night.
- A campfire is planned during the spring or fall fire seasons.

Small groups and individuals are not required to apply for a camping permit except under the above conditions. For the AFT, you can obtain permits from the Moshannon State Forest district office near the Mid State Airport. You can also obtain permits online. If there is enough lead time, permits can be mailed to your home in advance; otherwise you can pick them up at the State Forest office.

Large groups of ten or more campers are always required to apply for a permit, and must also obtain a letter of authorization from the district forester. This process is designed to control the damage that could result from large numbers of campers in sensitive areas.