

# **NEWS**

## **From the Delaware and Lehigh National Heritage Corridor**

### ***New Event Marks National Trails Day in Bethlehem***

**EASTON (May 18)** – One of Bethlehem’s oldest treasures will have a long overdue day in the spotlight on June 6.

The Lehigh Canal towpath, a National Recreation Trail known officially as the D&L Trail, will host a new National Trails Day event called “Travel the Towpath,” a celebration of the trail’s history, ecology and health and recreation opportunities.

Sponsored by the Delaware & Lehigh National Heritage Corridor, the event will take place from 10 a.m. to 1 p.m. along two miles of the towpath from West Sand Island to Canal Lock 43 east of the Minsi Trail Bridge. Activities and exhibits will be provided by local, state and federal agencies, non-profit organizations, businesses and individuals.

“We’re happy the towpath is getting some notoriety,” said D&L Outreach Coordinator, Dennis Scholl, who manages a group of volunteers - the Trail Tenders – who maintain and enhance the 180-year-old towpath. “We’re confident the canal area can become one of Bethlehem’s most relaxing and healthful parks if people learn how to use and appreciate it.”

Smokey the Bear will be among the cast of characters traveling the towpath on National Trails Day, a celebration of America’s trails held across the United States every year on the first Saturday in June. The friendly U.S. Forest Service icon will be greeting people and reminding young and old alike that “Only you can prevent forest fires.”

Other program participants include: the National Park Service; Wildlands Conservancy; Saucon Valley Bikes; Steel Fitness of Bethlehem; Segway of the Lehigh Valley; the Bethlehem Health Bureau; Pennsylvania Fish and Boat Commission; Lehigh Valley Greenways; Jacobsburg Environmental Center; South Bethlehem Historical Society; Touchstone Theater of Bethlehem; Steelworkers' Archives; First State Greyhound Rescue; Allentown Hiking Club; photographers Michael Shaw and Gordon Perry; and canal artist Jean Perry.

The Wildlands Conservancy will offer a special Bike 'n Boat program for the first 30 people who pre-register. The Conservancy will provide bicycles for participants to travel the towpath from West Sand Island to Canal Park in Allentown, where they will trade in the bikes for canoes and an interpretive trip down the Lehigh River to West Sand Island. The program will begin shortly after 10 a.m. Reservations can be made by calling the D&L at 610-923-3548, ext. 221.

Another event highlight is the dedication of the Sand Island Native Plant Preserve at 10:30 a.m. Bethlehem Mayor John Callahan will help dedicate the 600-foot plant restoration site created by the Trail Tenders over the past two years. Located at the confluence of Monocacy Creek and the Lehigh River, the preserve was occupied for many years by invasive plants that compromised the site's ecology. The Trail Tenders removed more than one acre of invasives by hand and replaced them with more than 30 species of natives grasses, flowers, shrubs and trees last fall. In time the preserve will become a nursery for seeds and young plants that will be used elsewhere along the D&L Trail.

The D&L and the Trail Tenders will be on hand to explain their work along the trail and also present the towpath's top 10 history stories. Touchstone Theater will provide readings for children from the new storybook "Tales of the Towpath," a D&L publication about a boy's travels and adventures along the Lehigh and Delaware canals in 1855. The storybook generated a local history curriculum that will be used by the Bethlehem Area School District and nine other districts in the 2009-2010 school year.

The Delaware & Lehigh National and State Heritage Corridor fosters stewardship of historical, cultural and natural resources along the early canal and railroad systems that carried anthracite coal from mine to market in eastern Pennsylvania. For more information go to [www.delawareandlehigh.org](http://www.delawareandlehigh.org), call 610-923-3548 x225, or e-mail [info@delawareandlehigh.org](mailto:info@delawareandlehigh.org).

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