

## The Conservancy Corner by Dick Byers

### **March to Support a Turtle Creek Rail Trail**

The 12<sup>th</sup> year of the Westmoreland County March for Parks event has, for the first time, a local charitable goal that every Murrysville resident should consider – the acquisition of 9.5 miles of the Turtle Creek Railroad for conversion to a bike trail. It is important that this acquisition take place for it will eventually become part of the Westmoreland Heritage Trail (WHT) which currently runs from Saltsburg to Delmont with the goal of bringing it to Murrysville and on to Trafford. The WHT in turn connects to the West Penn Trail which follows the Conemaugh River to Blairsville and will someday connect to the Ghost Town Trail that goes to Ebensburg. Bikers and hikers will someday in the future be able to ride or hike from Trafford to Ebensburg on what will be the most scenic rail/trail in western Pennsylvania. The addition of the rail trail through Murrysville will take the user through one of the wildest sections of Murrysville where wood ducks nest in massive sycamores, waterfalls pour off rocky cliffs where browsing deer can't reach a vibrant display of spring wildflowers. It is here that the crow-sized pileated woodpecker can always be found, along with Acadian flycatchers, spring peepers, wood frogs and migrant shorebirds that probe the stream banks. The acquisition and trail construction will also help protect this natural area from abuse, and proper management will make it a natural outdoor treasure for Murrysville residents. The connecting Westmoreland Heritage Trail to the east passes through the very scenic Beaver Run reservoir. I have yet to talk to anyone on that section of the trail who was disappointed. If this goal is achieved, Murrysville will be the envy of all the surrounding communities in terms of recreation opportunities.

Get involved. The March for Parks takes place on March 29. You can donate individually, form your own team or join the Murrysville Trail Alliance team. To register, join a team or donate, go to <http://www.co.westmoreland.pa.us/index.aspx?NID=761>