



The Capital Crescent Trail

Fall 1996

Vol. VIII No. 2

Coalition Celebrates 10th Anniversary!

On June 1 the Coalition celebrated it's tenth anniversary at the Washington Canoe Club. More than 100 members took part in the organization, planning and execution this momentous event. We'd like to extend our thanks to the Washington Canoe Club (especially Susan Johnstone and Blaise Rhodes), Mike Sullivan at A Big Event (for tables and chairs), Claude and Faith Broome (for donating their help to catering the event) in addition to (in no particular order). (If your name was left off of the following list it was because we received such an overwhelming response to our requests for help that your name -somehow- slipped through the cracks):

*Chris Brown
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"A Chronology of the First Ten Years Milestones: 1986-1996" written by Chris Brown and Scott Hall was distributed at the 10th Anniversary Celebration on June 1. The chronological history of the CCT which provides basic interesting facts about how the Capital Crescent has come to be. Starting in 1783 to present it focuses most specifically on the past ten years of development from rail to trail. Leave us a message on the hotline to receive yours if you haven't already.

River Road and Dalecarlia Bridges

By Ernie Brooks

These two construction projects are nearing completion and could be in use by the time you have received this Newsletter. The River Road bridge is essentially finished - the approaches have been paved, the bridge deck has been poured, and the fencing along the approaches is in place. Some shifting of the power lines at the northern end of the bridge is being done, and the arched fencing along the central span has yet to be installed. The parallel side access paths are being graded and should be completed soon.

The Dalecarlia bridge is a little further from completion, primarily due to its deck not having been poured (although the approaches have been paved). There appears to be an alignment concern which could affect the completion of the decking which the County and the Contractor are trying to resolve. One feature at Dalecarlia of concern to the Coalition is the use of the old bridge span which carried the Georgetown

Branch line over the old Glen Echo Trolley line.

We are concerned that the County may chose to use the 10' wide wood decking currently in place and considered "temporary" in a permanent manner. Not only does this width cause a narrowing of the trail (14' down to 10'), but the planks are oriented in the direction of travel rather than perpendicular to it. This is likely to pose problems as the planks warp over time and might cause a bike tire or in-line skate wheel to suddenly go off line. We have discussed this with County representatives and they have indicated that the old decking was used for economic reasons, but they intend to revisit the decking issue when their budget allows. In the meantime users should exercise some caution when on this portion of the Dalecarlia bridge.

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The Capital Crescent Trail is published three times a board year (June-June) by the Coalition for the Capital Crescent Trail (CCCT), P.O. Box 30703, Bethesda, MD 20824, phone (202) 234-4874, ewbrooks@oasys.dn.navy.mil. CCCT is a non-profit citizens' group promoting development of the 11.2 mile rail-to-trail conversion from Georgetown, D.C. to Silver Spring, MD for multi-purpose, recreational use.

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We request that all entries should be sent to the post office box listed above. Submissions should be sent on 3.5" diskette or via the internet to ewbrooks@oasys.dn.navy.mil.

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Reach the Capital Crescent by Internet

For those of you who prefer to "surf the net" you can reach the Capital Crescent Trail through Ernie Brooks.

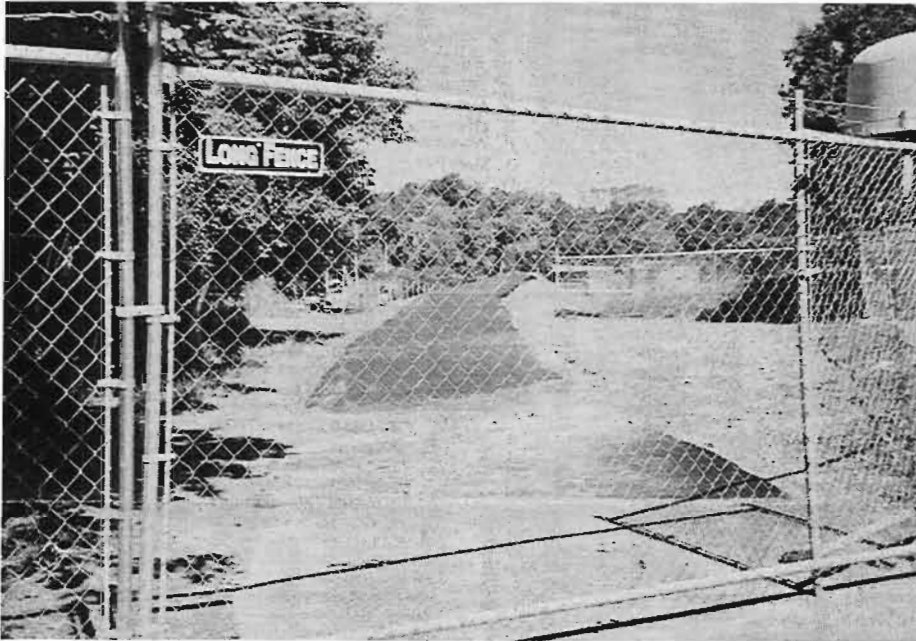
"ewbrooks@oasys.dn.navy.mil" he'll process your request.

River Road and Dalecarlia Bridges

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Finally, it should be noted that the raising of the power lines at River Road is being done gratis by PEPCO. This is saving the County many thousands of dollars and should mean that some of the planned amenities for the bridge can be added sooner than anticipated. The Coalition thanks the folks at PEPCO for this gesture!

To receive updates on the status of these bridges, call the CCCT hotline or contact Ernie Brooks at his email address given elsewhere in this issue.



*Dalecarlia construction
at the end of September
1996.*

*Photo by
John Campanile*

*River Road
construction of north
ramp end of September
1996.*

*Photo by
John Campanile*



Westbard Mews Fence on the Capital Crescent Trail

By Henri Bartholomot

As a number of you have noted, there is a new, tall, wood fence located very close to the west side of the Trail just north of the Massachusetts Avenue bridge. It starts at the north end of the bridge and runs several hundred feet in the direction of River Road. The fence is just a foot or two from the edge of the Trail and is on the order of 10 feet inside the property line separating the Trail right-of-way from the Westbard Mews condominiums that are located on the opposite side of the fence.

Based on conversations with County Parks Department staff, the fence has been installed in response to privacy concerns expressed by residents of the Mews during a public hearing back in the early 1990s. However, the Coalition was surprised to see the fence installed because a row of closely-spaced pine trees was planted several years ago near the property line between the trail and the condominiums. It was our understanding that those trees, which also appear to be located on County land, were intended to address the privacy concerns in a way that was relatively friendly both to residents of the Mews and to the Trail. We have expressed concerns to the Parks Department staff about installing such fencing so close to the Trail, and we have been assured that this approach will not casually be repeated. We have said that

we would prefer to use plants, such as bushes and trees, rather than fences to provide screening. We also have said that the screening should be located at or near the property line whenever possible, not adjacent to the trail. We also have repeated our standing request that we be consulted before major new work is done on or near the Trail, so that we might provide positive input.

This particular fence raises one other concern. At the fence's mid-point, there is a gate to allow residents of the Mews to gain access to the Trail. While the gate opens toward the Mews, not toward the Trail, CCCT has encouraged Park staff to relocate the gate to a safer area, or at least to post a warning on the Mews side of the gate that it should be used with caution (to avoid a pet or child, for example, darting out onto the Trail through the gate).

If you have further questions or thoughts about these matters, please contact the Community Relations Department at the Parks Department at 301/495-2503. We also would be happy to hear your views. Leave us a message at 202/ 234-4874 or drop us a note.

Despite Trail Support Concerns, County Council Approves Funds For Fence Along Capital Crescent Trail to Benefit Columbia Country Club

By Henri Bartholomot

On Tuesday, July 30, 1996, the Montgomery County Council approved \$100,000 -- on top of an estimated \$40,000 already appropriated -- to help pay for changes requested by the Columbia Country Club in the planned Interim Capital Crescent Trail between Bethesda and Silver Spring. The Club also will contribute some funds toward the total cost of the proposed changes, though less than the County.

A large part of these funds will be used to put an eight-foot high chain link fence along both sides of the Trail in the entire section where the Trail passes through the Club's property. Nearly half of the fenced area will be 16-foot wide, with 20-inch overhangs on each side, while the rest will be 25-foot wide, creating a fenced-in corridor more than one-third of a mile long.

The Trail right-of-way is 100-foot wide as it passes through the Club property, though the Club claims rights to some of that width (an issue now being litigated). The proposed fence will effectively cede use of more than 3/4 of this land to the Club, primarily for the Club's benefit. The Coalition has identified two relatively short parts of this section where fence or landscaping would be appropriate, on one side of the Trail, to protect trail users from golf balls. However, the remainder of the fence will be for the benefit of the Country Club and its members, to separate the Trail from the Club.

CCCT, along with the Washington Area Bicyclist Association and American Hiking Society, asked the Council not to approve such extensive use of close-in fencing. Instead, the three groups suggested that the County use fencing and landscaping in a more selective way to address the Country Club's concerns while creating a far friendlier trail. This could have shaved more than \$100,000 off the cost of the Club's proposed changes in the trail. However, the Club was unwilling to discuss these modifications, and threatened to sue the County to stop the Interim Trail if the County did not authorize the \$100,000.

CCCT is dismayed that \$100,000 in public funds is being spent for the benefit of a private landowner to the detriment of the Trail, when those funds could better be spent on other Trail components or public needs. For example, the tunnel under Wisconsin Avenue is still not part of the Interim Trail plan, and these funds could be instrumental in getting that piece of the Trail done.

We also are dismayed that the public's voice was effectively shut out of the negotiation that led to approval of the fence proposal. Though CCCT repeatedly requested an opportunity to discuss trail-friendly ways of addressing the Country Club's concerns, we were not given that chance. Neither the Club nor the County would sit down with us to discuss these issues. Instead, the fence deal was struck in private between the County and the Club.

Though the fence has now been approved and will be installed within the next few weeks, in time CCCT would still like much of it removed or at least relocated to the boundary between the Club and the Trail right-of-way. In shorter sections where fencing or landscaping near the Trail may be appropriate, we would like it used discreetly and the resulting Trail passageway made wider than the current plan. We also do not want this fence used as a precedent for similar treatment of other sections of the Trail. The "Interim" Trail may be around for a long time. It should be installed and maintained to the same high-quality as the more permanent sections.

In related developments, the County Council also approved use the appropriated funds to help the Country Club relocate its two gold cart crossings so they will pass below the trail (which will stay on its current alignment) rather than cross "at grade." CCCT views this as a positive development that will improve interaction between the Trail and golf course. The Council also approved funds to purchase two easements needed to connect the Interim Trail to Elm Street Park in Bethesda and to Kansas Avenue in Silver Spring.

Bethesda Urban Partnership Supports Opening Tunnel

By John Dugger

The Board of the Bethesda Urban Partnership, composed of business leaders and representatives of area residents interested in projects of benefit to Bethesda, met with Board members of the Capital Crescent Trail Coalition, the Greater Bethesda-Chevy Chase Coalition, and representatives of the county Parks and Transportation Departments on October 23. The purpose was to discuss opening the tunnel under Wisconsin Avenue in order to connect the Capital Crescent Trail west of Wisconsin Avenue with the new Interim Trail, to open by year-end east of Wisconsin. There was widespread support for paving the Trail within the tunnel and opening the tunnel as soon as feasible, recognizing that essential security measures would

include fencing, lighting, and other safety features in a long tunnel with a bend in the middle. Several property issues remain to be resolved, and substantial funding will be needed. Until the tunnel is open, Trail users will have to connect by crossing Wisconsin Avenue and using Bethesda streets.

Interim Trail to be Completed by End of Year. Many of you may have noticed that tracks and ties are being taken up on the corridor east of Bethesda. It is expected that track and tie removal will be completed by the end of December for the remaining section from Bethesda to Silver Spring exclusive of the Wisconsin Tunnel and Rock Creek Trestle.

Off With The Tracks

Brochure Circulation Tops 10,000

There are 10,000 brochures in circulation in the Washington Metro Area. We are now in the process of getting 5,000 more printed.

Shoppers needed!

How many of you use the trail to commute to work, shop or perform other activities? Joanne Dann jhdann@aol.com or (202) 244-6012 is looking for people to interview for an upcoming article about how people use the trail.

Dial Up Trail Status/Conditions

The Coalition for the Capital Crescent Trail has begun a hotline on current conditions and new section openings along the trail. Callers can also leave a message on trail conditions at (202) 234-4874 dial #8.

Attention Trail Users!

We want to encourage you to be the eyes and ears of the trail. Board members are on the trail every week, but not every day. If you find anything interesting happening on the corridor while out riding or know of any issues which might impact the trail, positively or negatively, give us a call at (202) 234-4874 and leave a message at #6.

New Board Elected in June

John Dugger was elected to head up the 1996-1997 board this year aided by Scott Hall as Vice-Chair, Ernie Brooks as Treasurer, Victoria Cordova as Secretary and Charlie Wellander as Assistant Treasurer working with the following board at large:

Henri Bartholomot

Susan Buffone

John Campanile

Nadine Dutcher

Doug Engle

Ken Golding

Chuck Kines

Phil Lerman

Margaret Marchak

Michael Witt

Volunteers Needed for Trail User Survey

Over the past few months the Coalition has been working with Montgomery County to complete the first portion of a two-segment trail-user survey. Volunteers have been working in response to a request from city planners from Montgomery County to track trail usage both before and after the bridges are opened. The statistics will be important to future funding for development of the trail.

While we have had an outstanding show of volunteers (40+) we still have a few more hours which need to be observed on the trail BEFORE the bridges are opened. After the bridges are opened we will be looking for volunteers to start up the second phase of the project.

Anyone interested in serving as a volunteer (even if it is for one hour) should contact Jody Tick at (703) 908-5828.

Volunteers spend one hour filling out a preprinted form on their own to track activity levels at both the Dalecarlia and River Road bridges. The survey can be conducted at any time of the day at the volunteer's choice.

The second part of the survey will begin shortly after the two bridges are opened for public use.

Battered Bridge: The Rock Creek Trestle

by G. Frederick Stork

*Part II - Unfortunate Happenings On and Around the Rock Creek Trestle
(Continued from Spring 1996 Newsletter)*

Let us now return to the story of the trestle. One afternoon early in 1967 as I returned from the Naval Research Laboratory in Washington to my home off Jones Bridge Road, I noticed a strange cloud to the east. I stopped by my house for a camera and headed for this aerial phenomenon. I found it to be caused by flames that engulfed the trestle. I took color pictures from above and from stream level as the flames licked the stout old timbers from bottom to top. The fire, apparently set by vandals, fed chiefly on the surface creosote and did no serious structural damage. Within four days trains resumed crossing the blackened bridge.

The second blow of a one-two punch was delivered by Tropical Storm Agnes in June 1972. The swollen creek, clogged with fallen trees and debris, raced through the narrow opening, knocked out the western support structure and left the central horizontal stringer dangling and the track sagging. The damage called for building a heavy steel support on the western side and strengthening the span with three horizontal steel stringers.

continue on next page



Dramatic scene early in 1967. The fire was probably set by misguided boys. Fortunately, it was put out before serious structural damage was done.

*Photo by
G. Frederick Stork*

Battered Bridge: The Rock Creek Trestle

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The ill winds that fanned the flames and blew during Agnes did indeed bring some good, because two of my photos of the events won substantial prizes in Rails-to-Trails contests.

About three years after Agnes two high school boys living near the trestle were walking across it and happened to notice something unusual near the bike path below. It proved to be the motionless body of a man, who, they quickly realized, was dead. Hurrying to the nearest of their homes, they reported their traumatic discovery, and the police were notified. The latter identified the deceased as a man who had been depressed and determined the cause of death as suicide by jumping from the bridge.

Through the years a few people found the trestle a handy shortcut across Rock Creek, and climbers found it a convenient suburban place to practice repelling. But when the rail operations ceased and the span began to deteriorate, Montgomery County officials considered it a safety hazard and in the early 1990's erected gates at each end. However, I have recently seen adventurous persons crossing and others repelling to land near the bicycle path on the eastern bank.

We hope that our battered centenarian bridge can be rebuilt one more time so that we can cross it on foot or on a bicycle and enjoy the beautiful view up and down Rock Creek. The trestle can be reached from East-West Highway and Meadowbrook Lane by walking northward on the blacktop path through the Ray's Meadow Recreation Area.



The sad condition of the battered bridge after Agnes in 1972. The shattered support structure on the left (the west) was removed and steel supports were built.

Photo by G. Frederick Stork

Battered Bridge The Rock Creek Trestle -- cont'd



*This 1990 picture (looking east) shows the result of five years of disuse and neglect. Soon afterward a cyclone type gate was installed where the posts are standing.
Photo by
G. Frederick Stork*

*This closeup shows charred ties, one of which is burnt through.
Photo by
G. Frederick Stork*



Battered Bridge The Rock Creek Trestle — *cont'd*



A March 1996 view of the trestle from the south emphasizing its impressive size and showing the 1972 steel construction on the left. Photo by G. Frederick Stork

Do you know this woman? Many of you may remember Debora Cackler who used to be the Executive Director for the Coalition for the Capital Crescent Trail years back. She is alive and well and living in England with her husband. Debora visits every so often to keep tabs on the trail as she did early last summer as pictured here.

*Photo by
Charlie McCormick*





Margo Kilgus and Lucille Renola pose for us in front of the Pinellas Trail sign in Dunedin, Florida.



Mark Noel Zemick sent this photo late last winter of the trail near his home. Maybe we will be as lucky this upcoming snowy season . . .

YES! I WANT TO HELP CREATE THE CAPITAL CRESCENT TRAIL

- | | |
|--|---|
| ☐ \$100. Special Honor Membership, commemorative spike, your name in our annual report, action alerts for one year and subscription to <i>The Capital Crescent Trail</i> . | ☐ \$30. Sustaining Membership, your name in our annual report, subscription to <i>The Capital Crescent Trail</i> and action alerts for one year. |
| ☐ \$60. Sponsoring Membership, your name in our annual report, subscription to <i>The Capital Crescent Trail</i> , action alerts for one year and a T-shirt. Please circle size: L XL (sorry no size small or medium) | ☐ \$15. Individual Membership subscription to <i>The Capital Crescent Trail</i> and action alerts for one year. |

I know of an organization that may join the CCT. The group is _____

Name _____

Address _____

Telephone _____ (h) _____ (w) _____

Coalition for the Capital Crescent Trail

P.O. Box 30703, Bethesda, MD 20824 Telephone 202-234-4874

Calendar of Upcoming Events

November 4	Board Meeting - Bethesda Library 7:00 p.m.
December 7	Hike- Leader To Be Announced on Hotline
January *	Winter Hike - Scott Hall
January *	Trail Maintenance Survey- Doug Engle
January 6	Board Meeting - Bethesda Library 7:00 p.m.
February 3	Board Meeting - Bethesda Library 7:00 p.m.
February 15	Deadline for Newsletter Submissions - Margaret Marchak
March 18	Board Meeting - Bethesda Library 7:00 p.m.

* Call CCCT Hotline for specific dates at the beginning of January 1997.

Coalition for the Capital Crescent Trail
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