



# THE CRESCENT

THE COALITION FOR THE CAPITAL CRESCENT TRAIL

Spring 1998

Vol X No. 2

## THE TUNNEL TRIUMPH - AND A BOOST FOR THE TRESTLE

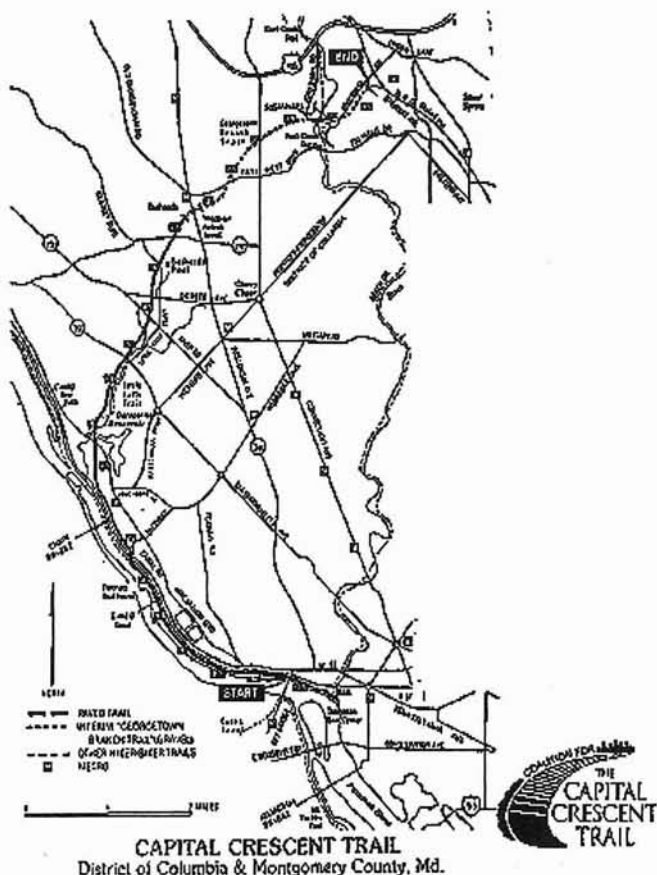
*by John Dugger*

The Montgomery County Council meeting on February 10 was controversial and suspenseful in dealing with the appropriation to fund renovations to open the Capital Crescent Trail (CCT) tunnel under Wisconsin Avenue to Trail users -- and when it was over, we rejoiced that a 5-4 majority had voted to appropriate \$410,000 towards that end. Council President Isiah Leggett and Council Member Betty Ann Krahne, long-time supporters of the CCT, were joined by Members Neal Potter, Nancy Dacek, and Michael Subin. The remaining Council Members voiced opposition for varying reasons: William Hanna opposed largely on economic grounds; Gail Ewing saw the tunnel as inevitably dangerous; Derick Berlage and Marilyn Praisner declared that in fairness to Silver Spring, opening the tunnel and restoring the Rock Creek trestle should be considered together.

This Council vote represents the culmination of efforts by the Coalition for the Capital Crescent Trail (CCCT) for over two years to link the present Capital Crescent Trail west of Wisconsin Avenue with the future Capital Crescent Trail east of Wisconsin Avenue (temporarily called the "Georgetown Branch Trail"), freeing Trail users from dealing with Bethesda streets and heavy Wisconsin Avenue traffic. Our efforts were strongly supported by local resident Pam Browning and her corps of volunteers, who collected nearly 9,000 petition signatures for opening the tunnel; by the Greater Bethesda-Chevy Chase Coalition; by the Washington Area Bicyclist Association; and other organizations and individuals. Particular credit should go to County Executive Douglas Duncan, who requested the funding and who has spoken on many occasions in support of the tunnel. A former tunnel opponent, Executive Duncan reversed his position after CCCT Board members took him (and Council Member Neal Potter, another former opponent) on a tour of the tunnel last year.

When open, the tunnel will reduce congestion on busy weekends by making the crushed-stone Trail east of Wisconsin (Bethesda to Silver Spring, at present not fully used) much easier to reach from the paved western portion of the Trail (Bethesda to Georgetown). It will facilitate access and encourage full use of the Rock Creek Trail

*(continued on page 4)*



**THE COALITION FOR THE CAPITAL CRESCENT TRAIL  
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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.dt.navy.mil" he'll process your request.

*The Crescent* 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. CCCT is a non-profit citizen's group promoting development of the 11.2 mile rail-to-rail 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 e-mail to [john\\_campanile@paramount.com](mailto:john_campanile@paramount.com).

## For Safety's Sake . . .

For the past ten years, the Coalition has led efforts to create this greenway that we know as the Capital Crescent Trail, and to achieve the best possible amenities to make the Trail safe and attractive. With the Trail's enormous popularity, safety continues to be one of our biggest priorities.

Regrettably, we continue to hear concerns from a number of people regarding bicyclists and rollerbladers who overtake trail users at considerable speed *without* any audible warning, and pet owners with their unleashed dogs (One comment: "This has become the Capital Canine Trail!").

The Trail is used frequently by elderly people, some of whom are hearing-impaired, and small children whose behavior can and will be unpredictable (Ever watch a child on their *brand-spanking* new roller skates or training wheel bike, or a curious toddler's sudden dart into the left lane?).

Warmer temperatures and longer days will mean more users on the Capital Crescent Trail -- users of ALL ages and at varying levels of competence. It is vitally important that trail users observe common-sense rules of courtesy and safety. These measures will prevent accidents from occurring and reduce the need for authorities to consider speed control devices, such as speed bumps in residential neighborhoods.



ALL USERS should stay to the right side of the trail except when passing.

Pass other trail users to their left, allowing at least two feet of clearance.

Always look ahead and behind before passing.

Give an audible warning, whether by bell or voice, at least two seconds before passing. (Such warnings are *required by law* in both Montgomery County & the District of Columbia.)

Travel at a reasonable speed in a consistent and predictable manner.

Keep all pets on a short leash. (Also required by law.)

Move off the trail when stopped to allow others to pass.

Yield to others users when entering or crossing the trail.

Use lights and reflectors after dusk and before dawn.

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### Dial Up Trail Conditions And Events

Be the Coalition's eyes and ears the next time you're out on the Trail -- call the CCCT "User Hot Line" at **202-234-4874, box 8**, and leave a message on trail conditions that you've encountered, or on any issue which might impact the Trail. The Hot Line message provides trail users with weekly updates on trail status, conditions, and Coalition events.

If you're new to the Capital Crescent Trail, leave your name and address to receive a membership brochure. After reading it, we hope you'll support the CCCT and become a member of the Coalition.

for travel south to Georgetown, or north past Rockville to Lake Needwood. The tunnel is particularly important in making the Bethesda library and swimming pool, among others area facilities and businesses, easily accessible to children living east of Wisconsin Avenue, as well as liberating parents accompanied by small children from the scary crossing through Wisconsin Avenue traffic.

The tunnel was originally built by B&O Railroad for its Silver Spring to Georgetown line that operated from 1910 to 1985. It runs between Woodmont Avenue and Elm Street in downtown Bethesda beneath the Apex Building and the Air Rights Building. The tunnel was purchased by Montgomery County as part of the Trail's right-of-way after then-owner CSX Railroad stopped running trains and abandoned the rail line more than a decade ago.

Present planning by the Montgomery County Department of Transportation and Public Works, the agency responsible for doing the tunnel work and intersection improvements at Woodmont and Bethesda Avenues, calls for beginning construction in April and completing it mid-summer, provided that several small real estate easements can be obtained. The Trail is expected to be 10-feet wide with two-foot soft shoulders on either side, with bright lighting and fencing sufficient for safety.

An interesting by-product of the Council debate and vote was the attention focused on the need to restore the trestle over Rock Creek Park in the interest of fairness to Silver Spring residents, who must now take a steep and circuitous route from the short piece of Trail in Silver Spring to get to the Trail west of the Park. Several Council members spoke in support of exploring requirements for restoring the trestle. As a result, the Council has requested County Executive Duncan to prepare studies of the cost of renovating the trestle and putting a trail on it, and of renovating or reconstructing the trestle to a degree that would allow both light rail and the Capital Crescent Trail to cross.

The Coalition thanks all those who have supported us in gaining this triumph.

Onward to the next target, the trestle!

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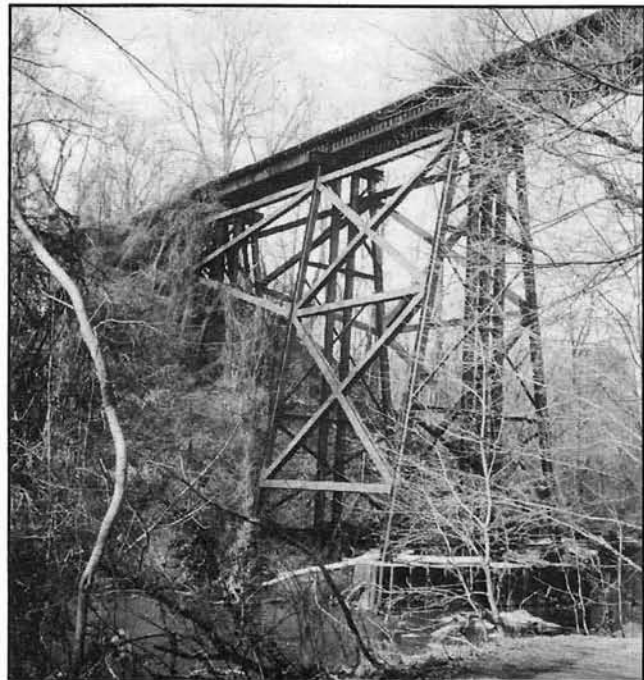
FOR TUNNEL WORK UPDATES, CALL THE CCCT USER HOTLINE: 202-234-4874, BOX 8

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## The Rock Creek Trestle

As originally built in 1892, this wooden structure that spans high above Rock Creek Park was 1400 feet long and 67 feet high, advertised as the longest on the B&O Railroad in its day. One of the most interesting and historic feature of the Capital Crescent Trail, this single-track bridge is located east of Jones Mill Road, just off East-West Highway. (It is best accessed from the playground that sits adjacent to Ohr Kodesh Synagogue at East-West Highway and Meadowbrook Lane.)

In 1967, the bridge was vandalized and went up in flames. But it remained structurally sound since the fire fed chiefly on the surface creosote, a wood preservative. Hurricane Angles dealt the bridge its second major blow in June 1972 when the rain-swollen Rock Creek raced through the narrow opening with fallen trees and debris in its wake, knocking out the support structure on the west side and leaving the central horizontal **stringer dangling and the track**



Rock Creek Trestle



sagging. But eventually, the bridge was fixed (shored up with steel beams) and trains service resumed as it had after the '67 fire.

Today, with fill added the steel trestle is 281 feet long and 69 feet high. Signs detour Trail users around the deteriorated, blackened structure to nearby Susanna Lane and the Rock Creek hiker/biker path. The Coalition, with the support of trail enthusiasts, will continue its efforts to convince County and State officials that we need a more *direct* route across Rock Creek - over it!

### "The culmination of effort"



*Tunnel supporters turned out at two of last year's rallies: The dedication of the Georgetown Branch Trail in May (top photo) and the Coalition-organized "Open The Tunnel" rally in September.*

## ACTION ALERTS ACTION ALERTS ACTION ALERTS ACTION ALERTS

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To: Park Lovers

From: Rick Morgan, **Peoples Alliance for Rock Creek (PARC)**

(Editor's note: PARC includes 21 advocacy and environmental organizations, including the Coalition for the Capital Crescent Trail.)

As you may know, The National Park Service (NPS) is currently conducting a "general management plan" (GMP) for Rock Creek Park. This may be our best chance ever to address critical concerns such as excessive automobile traffic, run-down trails, and limited public access.

However, the latest GMP newsletter from the Park Service seems to confirm the worst fears of park advocates: NPS appears to be just going through the motions of the process. The NPS newsletter reports on public reaction to its original four planning alternatives and identifies "current management" as the "most popular" alternative, a plan that preserves the status quo. However, the newsletter fails to mention that all four alternatives were widely criticized because they were packaged in a way that divided park users. (For example, traffic restrictions favored by bicyclists and environmentalists were combined with elimination of community gardens and horse stables!)

Worst of all, the NPS document never acknowledged that our alliance of 21 park advocacy and environmental organizations developed an alternative plan of its own, known as "Alternative 2-1/2." (It's mainly a blending of measures from other planning alternatives developed by the Park Service, particularly Alternatives 2 and 3.) The 21 organizations endorsing Alternative 2-1/2 represent 36,000 members in the Washington metropolitan area. Endorsers include hikers, bikers, joggers, equestrians, skaters, gardeners, environmentalists, park and community activists.

Alternative 2-1/2 seeks to protect the most sensitive and scenic portions of Rock Creek Park by creating permanent auto-free zones on upper Beach Drive, thereby discouraging use of the park as a commuter artery to and from downtown Washington. It would leave open 90 percent of the park's roads, including all of Rock Creek Parkway, all of Beach Drive below Board Branch Road, and all routes crossing the park. Alternative 2-1/2 would also improve the park's paved trails and enhance public access to the park.

**HERE ARE 3 THINGS YOU CAN DO to make Rock Creek a real park 7 DAYS A WEEK:**

1) Send a letter to park officials in support of Alternative 2-1/2 or specific measure such as traffic restrictions, improved access, or better trails. Send your letter to:

Ms. Adrienne Coleman, Superintendent  
Rock Creek Park  
3545 Williamsburg Lane N.W.  
Washington, DC 20008

cc: Mr. Robert Stanton, Director  
National Park Service  
1849 C Street, N.W.  
Washington, D.C. 20240

cc: Mr. Terry Carlstrom, Director  
National Capital Region/NPS  
1100 Ohio Drive, S.W.  
Washington, DC 20240

If you don't have time to write, leave a message on the Rock Creek Park hot line: (202) 282-1008

2) Forward this message to others who love Rock Creek Park, and/or send their e-mail addresses to <rick@waba.org>.

3) Plan to come to PARC's rally to celebrate Rock Creek Park, on Mother's Day, May 10. If you'd like to help plan the rally, contact Karen Nozik at <bfakaren@transact.org>, or (202) 463-6622.

**On behalf of PARC, thanks for your support!**

TAKEN FROM THE PALISADES NEWS, FEB. 1998. REPRINTED WITH PERMISSION OF AUTHOR.

## **Capital Crescent Trail Sets The Stage For 2<sup>nd</sup> Annual "Inertial 1998"**

### **Palisades residents coast into 1998**

Logging a 1.57-mile coast on his 19-lb. Titanium-framed Performance road-racing bicycle, Mark Gallagher of Cathedral Avenue won the 2<sup>nd</sup> Annual Palisades Inertial on January 1. This was a repeat victory for Gallagher, a seasoned cyclist who commutes by bike to work at the Justice Department. He led a pack of eight entrants - twice the number who competed in the 1997 inaugural race.

Gallagher, 39, had hoped to slip the surly bonds of gravity and roll the whole way to Georgetown. "But I encountered a head wind as I was approaching the Arizona Avenue bridge, and that hurt me," he said. The wiry attorney attributed his victory to narrow, hyper-inflated tires that reduced ground drag; other racers also accredited his aerodynamic crouch and pear-shaped helmet. He vowed to return for a third try at first place next year.

The Inertial, a neighborhood tradition, takes place on the Capital Crescent Trail adjacent to the intersection of Norton Street and Potomac Avenue. The race starts at the apogee of the bridge carrying the trail over an access road at the rear of the Dalecarlia Aqueduct. Participants may push off, but only with their weaker legs, then must coast as far as possible along the macadam trail towards Georgetown. The trial occupies the bed of an abandoned Baltimore & Ohio Railroad line whose route attracted the train line because of its felicitous grade.

Competition is open to bicycles of any sort and riders of any age, according to Michael Dolan, who predicted that someday technology and human endurance would enable an Inertial to roll all the way to K Street.

"The possibilities are limitless" said Dolan, who tied for second place in the 1998 race with fellow Inertial-founder Sam Brownell. "I foresee great leaps in research and design that will eventually produce Inertial-specific bikes with heavy frames and tires with tiny circumferences - sort of devolutionary for weird science. We may even have to start having classes, but for now the competition is wide open."

As yet unmarred by spectators or hordes of entrants, the Inertial is a strangely subdued affair in which rider upon rider pushes off, hunkers down, and perches, feet rigid on unmoving pedals, as gravity, mass, and weight take their course. Some competitors engage in prodigious feats of body English in the effort to keep moving; others simply sit and roll, oblivious to the stares of more aerobically-inclined trail users.

Buffeted by the same gusts that hampered Gallagher, Dolan and Brownell eked out a 1.09-mile roll, followed by third-entrant Eileen O'Toole at 1.08 miles. Marty Dolan, another founding member of the race committee, repeated at fourth place, with a 1.065-mile coast on his brand-new Mongoose mountain bike. Bill Brownell, Lynn Brownell, and Kate Brownell brought up the rear of the slow moving pack.

"The Inertial honors the Law of Inertia as well as the beginning of the New Year," said Michael Dolan. "We want to get the flywheel rolling, get the blood pumping, and get the muscles moving. But we also want to respect the principle of moderation in all things, especially exercise. The Inertial is a perfect vehicle for these noble aims. Plus, since the Trail is administered by the National Park Service, it's illegal to race there, which makes it really cool."

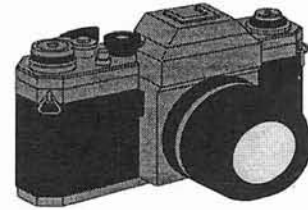
**- Mike Dolan**

Mike is one of many professional writers living in the Palisades.

(For news about the 1999 Inertial, e-mail to [emdolan@aol.com](mailto:emdolan@aol.com))

## CCCT Member Wins RTC Photo Contest

Longtime CCCT member Fred Stork won the grand prize in Rails-to-Trails Conservancy's (RTC) 1997 photo contest for his black-and-white image "Jog In The Fog." His photo appears on the front page of RTC's January-March 1998 issue. *Congratulations Fred!*



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### 5 Years Ago...

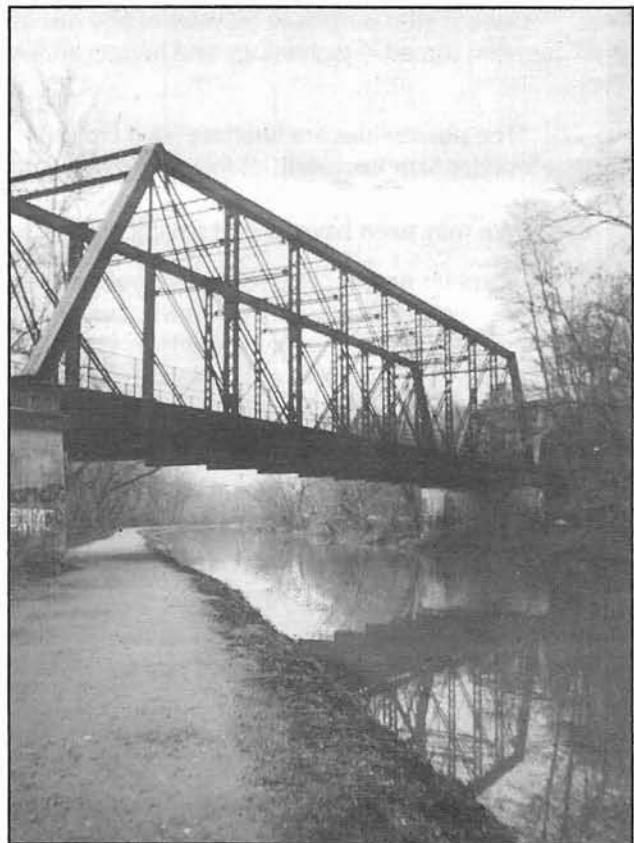
Construction of the Capital Crescent Trail begins with \$100,000 in-kind donation from Potomac Electric power Company (PEPCO) on 0.6-mile section between Bethesda Avenue and Little Falls Parkway (April).

### 10 Years Ago...

At a public hearing before the Montgomery County Council, a rally for buying the corridor right-of-way features the Coalition for the Capital Crescent Trail's large blue balloon-filled "Capital Croissant" (March).

### 100 Years Ago...

Two old steel truss bridges are disassembled at other sites, transported, and re-erected to cross the C&O Canal and Canal Road. Held together by 2- to 3-inch pins rather than rivets and of a Whipple trapezoid design, they are an outstanding example of late-19<sup>th</sup> century transportation engineering. Today, this bridge is known as the Arizona Avenue Trestle (photo right).





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## ***Did You Know...?***

That 134 million Americans walk for outdoor recreation every year?

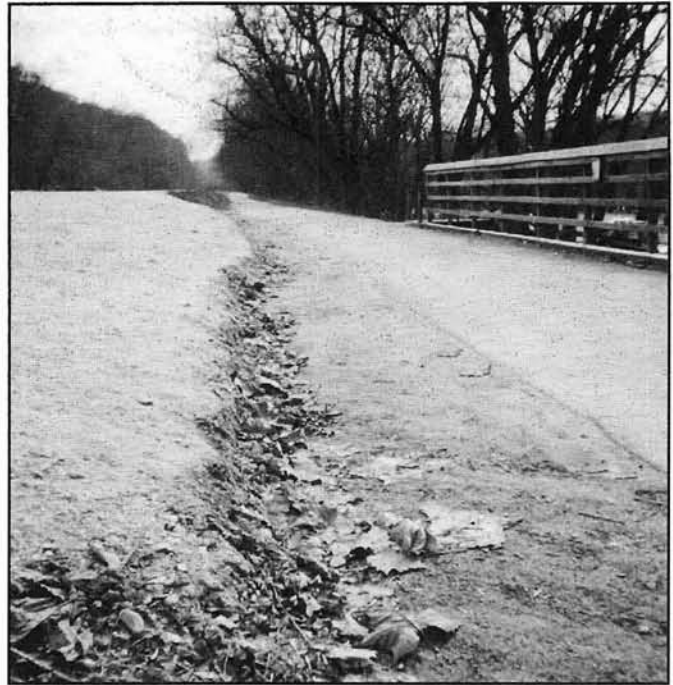
ACTIVITY	ANNUAL PARTICIPATION
Walking	134 million
Bicycling	57 million
Bird Watching	54 million
Running/Jogging	52 million
Horseback Riding	14 million

Source: 1997 National Survey on Recreation and Environment, prepared for the USDA Forest Service.



The Environmental Film Festival in the Nation's Capital, now in its sixth year, will screen 80 documentary, animated, archival, feature, and children's film selected to provide fresh perspectives on environmental issues around the globe. The films will be screened at museums, embassies, universities, and libraries from March 27 through April 5. Most events include discussions with environmental experts or filmmakers and almost all are free.

Contact: 202-342-2564; or at  
<http://www.capaccess.org/eff>.



#### **Clean Up At Fletcher's**

Coalition volunteers cleared gravel from the Capital Crescent Trail (left) that had spilled down from the C&O Towpath. These same volunteers also improved visibility in that area for Trail users by trimming overgrown weeds and shrubs along the railing.



#### **A Holiday Hike**

Sunny conditions and unseasonably warm temperatures made the Coalition's January 3<sup>rd</sup> hike of the Trail a great way to work off holiday over-indulgence. Nineteen Coalition members and Trail enthusiasts hiked 3 miles from Silver Spring to a downtown Bethesda pizzeria (So much for working off holiday over-indulgence!).

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## Yes! I Want To Help Complete The Capital Crescent Trail!

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Name(s) \_\_\_\_\_ (H) \_\_\_\_\_ (W) \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_ Apt. \_\_\_\_\_

City \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_ Zip \_\_\_\_\_

☐ \$100\* SPECIAL HONOR MEMBERSHIP

Commemorative rail spike, your name on our annual report, action alerts and subscription to our newsletter. [Rail spike: ☐ yes ☐ no]

☐ \$30 SUSTAINING MEMBERSHIP

Newsletter subscription, action alerts.

☐ \$10 INDIVIDUAL MEMBERSHIP

Newsletter subscription, action alerts.

☐ \$60 \* SPONSORING MEMBERSHIP

\*T-shirt, if desired. Circle size: M L XL

Newsletter subscription, action alerts.

☐ New member ☐ Renewing Member ☐ Additional contribution, \$ \_\_\_\_\_

Make checks payable to: The Coalition for the Capital Crescent Trail, P.O. Box 30703, Bethesda, MD. 20824

Detailed four-color map of the Capital Crescent Trail with historical perspectives is free to new members.

*All contributions are tax-deductible.*

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## Calendar of Events

\* Wheelchair accessible. All events are rain or shine, unless noted. To confirm, call the CCCT, 202-234-4874, box 8  
Monday, March 16, 7 p.m. CCCT BOARD MEETING\*, Bethesda Regional Library, Arlington Rd. Bethesda Metro. Indoor bicycle parking. *Guests are welcome!*

Saturday, March 21, 10 a.m. "RIDE INTO SPRING" BIKE HIKE. Capital Crescent/Rock Creek social ride. Start/end Bethesda CCT Trailhead. Bethesda Metro. Rain date is March 28. See back page.

Monday, April 6, AUSTIN GRILL NIGHT\*. Details TBA. Bethesda Metro.

Saturday, April 11, 10:30a.m. BIKE RIDE. Capital Crescent/Rock Creek circuit ride. Start/end Bethesda. See back page.

Monday, April 20, 7 p.m. CCCT BOARD MEETING\*, Bethesda Regional Library, Arlington Rd. Bethesda Metro. Indoor bicycle parking. *Guests are welcome!*

Wednesday, April 22, 7 a.m. EARTH DAY BIKE-IN ON THE CCT. Ride to Earth Day event in downtown D.C. Meet at Bethesda Avenue Trailhead. Sponsored by Washington Area Bicyclist Assoc., 202-628-2500.

Late April, date tba, WILDFLOWER PLANTING DAY, CCCT Earth Day event. Details TBA.

Saturday, May 16, 10:30a.m. BIKE RIDE. Capital Crescent/Rock Creek circuit ride. Start/end Bethesda. See back page.

Monday, May 18, 7 p.m. CCCT BOARD MEETING\*, Bethesda Regional Library, Arlington Rd. Bethesda Metro. Indoor bicycle parking. *Guests are welcome!*

Saturday, June 6, 10:30 a.m. BIKE RIDE. Capital Crescent/Metropolitan Branch ride. See back page.

Monday, June 15, SUMMER 1998 NEWSLETTER DEADLINE. Submissions to: P.O. Box 30703, Bethesda, 20824.

Monday, June 15, 6 p.m. CCCT ANNUAL MEMBERSHIP MEETING\*. Elm St. Park, downtown Bethesda (Elm St. & 47<sup>th</sup> Ave.) Playground available. Food & refreshments served.

## Spring Bike Hikes on the CCT

Saturday, March 21\*, 10 a.m., Capital Crescent Trail/Rock Creek social ride. 24 miles. \*Ride is GO if 9 a.m. temp at least 40; rain 40% or less. Rain date is March 28.

Saturday, April 11, 10:30 a.m.,

Capital Crescent Trail/Rock Creek circuit ride.

Rain or shine.

Saturday, May 16, 10:30 a.m.,

Capital Crescent Trail/Rock Creek circuit ride.

Rain or shine.

Saturday, June 6, 10:30 a.m.,

Capital Crescent Trail/Metropolitan Branch circuit ride.

Rain or shine.

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*All rides start/end at the Bethesda Trailhead of the Capital Crescent Trail, Bethesda and Woodmont Avenues, one block west of Wisconsin Avenue, next to Honda dealership and across from Barnes and Noble. If unsure of conditions, call the CCCT User and Event Hot Line, 202-234-4874, box 8.*



P.O. Box 30703  
Bethesda, MD 20824

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