



## Upcoming Events

- July 13th-15th Mountain Bike Festival. Fri, Sat, Sun: Hartwood, Boyce, North Park. The Big PTAG event will be bigger and more fun filled than ever: better trails, a group hike, ladies ride, and a pig roast! Booyah!
- July 29th, North Park Work day. Meet at 9:00 am at the Olympia Shelter.
- August 5th-19th BikePGH's annual BikeFest. Lots of activities including Pedal Pittsburgh on August 5th and The Fundraiser Party on August 10th. Check out [bike-pgh.org](http://bike-pgh.org)
- August 19th Boyce Park Workday. Come get to know this fantastic network of trails.
- August 25th Highland Park Trail Opening Party. Join PTAG as we celebrate the new single track in Highland Park. Food, drinks, rides and hikes.

## Highland Park Single Track Trail Open



The City of Pittsburgh added new single track to its CitiParks network. The trail access is on Lake Drive near the swimming pool in Highland Park. Read our profile of John Read on page 2 to get all the details about this great new outdoor opportunity in Pittsburgh's East End.

## PTAG T-Shirts and Socks for New Members

PTAG is known in volunteer circles as a lean organization. With only one part-time staff member, our overhead is very low. However, we do need money to buy shovels, rakes, and other trail building materials. We



use membership dues to pay for this. Join now and receive a classic heavy-weight T-shirt or a pair of stylish and practical socks. Get on the good foot and get your PTAG merchandise by joining or renewing your membership today. Basic new members get stickers, Enthusiast new members get a nice black T-shirt, and Advocate new members get socks and a T-shirt! Get yours today!

## Join PTAG

Sign up for an annual membership or consider a one time gift—we need your support.

Visit [ptagtrails.org](http://ptagtrails.org)

## Hillman Work Day Successful

During June nine hard-working volunteers built approximately 1000 feet of new trail in Hillman State Park. The new trail begins a segment that will circumnavigate private land in the park. Look for upcoming work days in 2012 to complete the first stage of the planned trails network. For information, contact Ben Staud, [b.staud@yahoo.com](mailto:b.staud@yahoo.com)

## Mountain Bike Fest 2012

The 7th annual PTAG Mountain Bike Festival kicks off this weekend. Please join us in celebrating great trails and our continued access to open spaces. Friday, July 13th is at Hartwood Acres; Saturday, July 14th at Boyce Park; Sunday, July 15th at North Park. See the attached flyer on page 3 or visit the PTAG website, [ptagtrails.org](http://ptagtrails.org) for details.

## Park Steward Profile: John Read

Since work started in June 2010 John Read has led PTAG trail crews on over 1400 volunteer hours to establish the first official single track trail in Highland Park. The trail is now open, and, at about a mile long, it provides a great after work urban retreat. The entrance is beside the newly constructed concrete staircase on Lake Drive, across the street, and north, of the volleyball courts.

John Read has a quiet determination that spreads enthusiastically to those who have worked with him. He describes himself as a perfectionist, and, with a smile, admits his efforts in Highland Park might be considered a bit obsessive. John has been riding mountain bikes for about ten years and has served as the Park Steward for Highland Park (HP) since early 2011. PTAG Dirt caught up with John during June, 2012.

### Describe your trail design process.

First we flag a proposed trail route through the woods, always looking to take the trail through natural dips in the terrain, near scenic features, and avoid straight lines. Sometimes we will reflag the route several times until we feel we have the best possible route, then we will walk the proposed route with the appropriate people from the Pittsburgh Parks Conservancy and the City to get the proposed trail approved to build.

### The trail looks great. Who has been helpful, what organizations have you worked with to make it happen?

Yeah, we've been working really hard on the trail. We worked closely with some Student Conservation Association (SCA) crews in 2010 and continue to work with the City maintenance department and the Pittsburgh Parks Conservancy. These organizations have been awesome to work with—we are really fortunate to have such great people from these groups that have been really supportive of PTAG's trail work.

### What were the challenges?

One 100 yard section of trail required about 260 hours of hard work to punch through. The section was an old dump, completely overgrown, with vines and knotweed that was so thick we couldn't see more than 10 feet in front of us when we started. After chopping through the knotweed with a machete for a month we did an enormous amount of bench-cutting into a steep hillside but had to constantly lay our digging tools

down to remove about 300 bags of trash. We moved about 20 tons of concrete rubble that was scattered around the hillside and used the heavy duty PTAG hoist to flip a discarded 4000 lb. block of concrete from the trail. One bonus of working in this section is that we recovered over 5 tons of scrap metal which, when sold, generated a \$750 PTAG donation. Also, we got lucky: despite not being able to get a good look at the terrain in this area when we started, this section of trail turned out to be really fun to ride.

### There are some similarities between the HP trail and the Raystown Lake, PA trails. How do you feel about the IMBA trail building guidelines? Was Raystown a source of inspiration for you?

The trails at Raystown Lake definitely inspired and continue to influence our trail-building in Highland Park. At Raystown Lake the trail-builders had the benefit of mechanized earthmoving equipment so they could choose to cut their trails into the side of the hill so the trails drain better than a typical hilltop trail. They also built many grade reversals that make the trails super fun for the trail user and also help drainage. In HP we have virtually no hilltops to build trails on so we are usually forced to bench cut all our trails into the hillside. Since we're bench cutting so much here anyway, with just a little more effort it's pretty easy to add grade reversals and dips to the trail. The IMBA guidelines are spot-on and we like to think our trail incorporates many good examples of those guidelines.

### What are the future plans for HP?

In November 2011, Sara Thompson, an HP resident, PTAG board member, and Landscape Architect, hosted a "Trails Interest Meeting" in the HP neighborhood at the Union Project. The meeting was attended by over twenty people. PTAG gathered community input and ideas for future trail connections in HP. Currently PTAG is taking ideas from the Trails Interest Meeting and continued community input and working with the Pittsburgh Parks Conservancy and the City on a master



plan for trails in HP. One of the steps to complete this plan will be to hike all the hillsides in the park. Some of the ideas from the November meeting include a trail that would extend from our existing trail at the north-eastern corner of the park southward along the hillside above Washington Blvd and up Negley Run towards East Liberty Blvd—from there it's less than two miles to the northern edge of Frick Park.

### That's exciting. Do you want to give a shout out to anyone? Hype up the opening day in August?

Yeah, my friend Rob Pell has been a phenomenal help with the trail—he is an incredibly productive and skilled trail-builder. We probably would not be half as far along with the trail if not for him—he really keeps us focused and pushing forward. We are also fortunate to work with Erin Copeland with the Parks Conservancy, despite her busy schedule working in all the bigger parks in the city, Erin has made the time to do countless trail walks with us. Also, in addition to putting together the very successful Trails Interest Meeting last November, Sara Thompson has experience designing trails professionally in PA and has been a great help with trail design and helping to get new trail sections approved for construction. Many trail volunteers deserve a big thanks in HP but some loyal trail-workers that deserve mention include Mike Rizk, Brett Kennedy, Alan Houser, Erika Kopanic, DeeDee Grace, Mike Richer, Aaron Basmajam, David White, and Richard Glass. August 25th, the PTAG folks in HP will be hosting a PTAG fund-raiser, membership drive, volunteer appreciation, trail opening party. Check the PTAG website and stay tuned for details!