



The Boardwalk at the Millbrook Marsh Nature Center

Features in this Issue:

<i>The Boardwalk at Millbrook Marsh Nature Center</i>	1
<i>Boardwalks</i>	2
<i>PRPS Educational Opportunities</i>	3
<i>Featured Trail-The Boardwalk at Millbrook Marsh Nature Center</i>	4

By Molly Hetrick, Recreation Supervisor - Nature Center Centre Region Parks & Recreation, State College, PA 16801

During 2004, the final phase of the boardwalk trail network was completed at the Millbrook Marsh Nature Center located in State College, PA. This network provides a guided walk for visitors through the wetland preserve and protects this fragile environment from the impact of visitors. During 2004, more than 5,000 visitors attended organized programs at the nature center and countless others visit the center on a daily basis to enjoy this beautiful area.

The process to develop the boardwalk at Millbrook Marsh Nature Center involved partnerships, fundraising, and community efforts. It was one of the priority improvements when the original Master Plan was created for the 62-acre wetlands-based nature center in 1997. At that

time, the grounds were rugged, few trails were established, and the nature center was just "an old farm, a pile of boards, and a dream" shared by a few energetic people.

As part of Centre Region Parks & Recreation, Millbrook Marsh Nature Center began to take shape in 1997, and plans for an extensive boardwalk and trail system were developed. The mission to provide

permit was obtained from the PA Department of Environmental Protection to construct the boardwalk network and bridges within the floodplain of the wetland.

In 2002, Centre Region Parks & Recreation was awarded a project grant from the Pennsylvania Conservation Corp, which provided a work crew for municipal park improvement projects. The PCC crew assisted the Centre Region Parks & Recreation maintenance staff and some dedicated volunteers with the in-house construction of the boardwalk.

Overall, the All-Aboard fundraising project raised a total of \$57,707 to purchase materials for the construction of the boardwalk network. The boardwalk is a total of 1,615' in length and includes three bridges. The six-foot wide wooden plank path leads visitors through the nature center grounds, connecting to other trails, including the College Township Bike Path at the nature center's far border. One part of the boardwalk

Con't pg.3



education about the value of wetlands would be greatly enhanced by the wetlands boardwalk - without impacting the resource. The "All-Aboard for the Boardwalk" fundraising campaign was announced in 1999, inviting the individuals to purchase single boards or groups of boards to make the boardwalk a reality. A wetlands

Special Thanks

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Upcoming PRPS Trail Training:

- * **February 25, 2005**
Trail Design, Construction, and Maintenance Workshop
Drums, PA
- * **March 1, 2005**
Trail Design, Construction, and Maintenance Workshop
Slippery Rock, PA
- * **March 19-23, 2005**
Spanning the Years PRPS Annual Conference
Hershey, PA
- * **May 5 & 6, 2005**
Save the Dates!
First Annual PA Greenway & Trail Summit
Mechanicsburg, PA

To register or for more information on these workshops, please phone the PRPS Office at: 814-234-4272

Boardwalks - by Don Clymer, Trails Specialist

There comes that place on some trails where the ground surface is just not capable of supporting the trail, and there is no way to get around that place due to streams, terrain, or land ownership. It requires a boardwalk to get across this "swamp" or "bog". It might look like the area to the left:



How about using puncheon in these areas? Sure! It works as well as boardwalk! Actually puncheon and boardwalk are the same thing, only some folks use one name, and some folks use the other name. Basically puncheon or boardwalk is just a bunch of very short bridges placed in a line to get across an area that won't support a tread on the ground. Or, sometimes

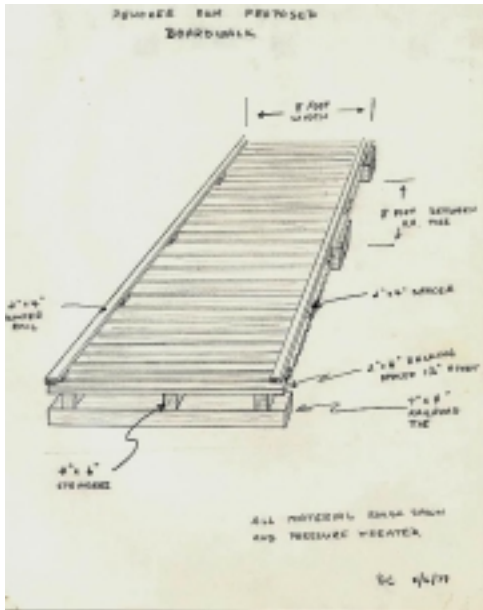
they're used where the ground is very rough and you don't want to, or can't, level out the trail surface, so the boardwalk is built above the natural surface to provide a smooth level trail.

Lots of materials can be used to build a boardwalk but the most common is pressure treated wood: The basic design is shown below. The mudsills support the structure on the soft ground. The decking should be spaced 1 1/2 inches apart to allow light to penetrate through the deck to maintain a living sod surface as much as possible. Screws or spiral nails work better than common nails to secure the deck because they don't work back out of the wood and become a hazard.

Pennsylvania Recreation & Park Society, Inc.

This newsletter is published 4 times a year as a service to its members and other interested persons. Opinions expressed are those of the listed authors. The editors encourage submissions reflecting on educational information for Trails. You are encouraged to submit your article for review on disc or by e-mail to:

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Below is a picture of a completed boardwalk in the area shown in the first picture. This boardwalk has been in place for almost 25 years.



Sometimes the sod surface won't even support a regular mud sill boardwalk, or the ground surface is very uneven, requiring an elevated boardwalk. In these locations you can use a pile boardwalk. The piles are dug down and set like fence posts, then braced upright (use a level). Then a joist is bolted between the piles, to take the place of the mudsills and support the stringers. It works well to extend the piles above the deck to also attach the railings. A pile boardwalk looks just like the boardwalks we see along beaches at the shore. Here is a pile boardwalk located on a snowmobile trail crossing a swamp:



When you build your boardwalk be sure to use pressure treated wood and galvanized screws, bolts and hardware. This will make the boardwalk low maintenance and long lasting, which is very important in remote trail locations.

Boardwalks require a lot of labor to construct but they also make excellent "group" projects since there is a lot of interaction and socialization during the project. So gather a bunch of folks, bring the "barbie", and build yourself a boardwalk across that swamp! Happy Trails!

Clymer's Trail Works



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The Boardwalk at Millbrook Marsh- Con't from pg.1

includes a bird blind, a small three-sided building with openings for birdwatchers to observe marsh birds unnoticed.

Visitors to the center are enjoying the smooth, dry walk that the boardwalk provides, as well as the places to stop and observe wildlife or sit on a bench under a willow tree. The nature center and the boardwalk attract many different kinds of visitors, including bird-watchers, nature artists, joggers, dog-walkers, and families on an afternoon walk. Donors to the "All-Aboard for the Boardwalk" project are recognized on plaques placed along the boardwalk.

The boardwalk also provides an excellent platform for the outdoor environmental education that is offered on the site. By staying on the boardwalk trail, thousands of school aged children can enjoy the marsh, learn of its importance, and view its beauty without causing an impact or disruption to the soil and living things in this delicate ecosystem.

Group programs, including the Marsh Exploration Program and the Wetland Critters Program, make use of the boardwalk for hands-on explorations, senses walks, stream



studies, critter collections, wetland observations, wildlife tracking, and more! Muskrats, Great Blue Herons, Mallard Ducks, Snapping Turtles, Kingfishers, and more can be observed from the platforms and bridges of the boardwalk. Marsh plants such as Cattails, Joe-Pye

Weed, sedges, Blue Flag, and Dame's Rocket can be observed in spring and summer.

There are three streams that wind through the nature

in water and wetlands visit the nature center to study the water and the animals that make their homes there.

Now that the boardwalk is completed, a self-guided Wetlands Walk brochure is being developed for visitors. The brochure will offer information at various numbered stops along the boardwalk to educate interested visitors about the different areas of the marsh. Plan a visit to the Millbrook Marsh Nature Center very soon and enjoy the new boardwalk! Please contact Centre Region Parks & Recreation for more information about programs and events, or visit <http://www.CentreConnect.org/crpr>.

Centre Region Parks & Recreation provides municipal parks and recreation services to the Borough of State College and the Townships of College, Ferguson, Harris, and Patton.

center: Bathgate Springs Run, Thompson Run, and Slab Cabin Run. The boardwalk leads visitors through the marsh with viewing opportunities at each of these streams. Many students from high school and the Penn State University who are interested

PRPS Educational Opportunities

Trail Design, Construction, and Maintenance Workshop-2005

(two locations)

Friday, February 25 - Nescopeck State Park &

Tuesday, March 1 - Jennings Env. Ed. Center

Don Clymer, US Forest Service, will be presenting this practical trail design, construction, and maintenance workshop. Topics of focus will be bridges, culverts, boardwalks, dips, waterbars, retaining walls, geosynthetic, switchbacks & climbing turns, obiteration techniques, steps, turnpike, causeways, stoning, paving blocks, mechanized equipment and handtools.

Workshop hours: 8:00 a.m.- 4:30 p.m.

Registration for PRPS Members: \$85

Non-Members: \$95

Tuition includes: Lunch and refreshments, handouts, .7 CEU's, and instruction.

If you are on the Trails To You mailing list, you should have received a registration brochure. If you did not or have any questions, please contact Lisa Litz by email at llitz@prps.org or by phone at 814-234-4272.

Save These Dates!

May 5 & 6, 2005



First Annual PA Greenway & Trail Summit

You will not want to miss this exciting opportunity to be a part of the First Annual PA Greenway & Trail Summit. The two-day Summit will be held in Mechanicsburg at the Holiday Inn Harrisburg West. Featured topics include: Trail Amenities, Attractions, & Artifacts; Trails & Streams; PA Trail Design Manual for OHV; Creating a Local Greenway & Trail System; Economical Bridges; Coping with Conflicts on Multi-use Trails; State & Federal Funding Opportunities for Greenways & Trails; Rail-Trail Maintenance and many more. There will be mobile workshops, keynote speakers, and exhibits. Don't miss this one!

If you are on the Trails To You mailing list, a registration brochure will be arriving soon. If you have any questions, please contact Lisa Litz by email at llitz@prps.org or by phone at 814-234-4272.

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WE'RE ON THE WEB!
WWW.PRPS.ORG

The Boardwalk at Millbrook Marsh Nature Center

- 1,615' in length and 6' wide

- Includes three bridges, three viewing platforms, a bench, and a bird blind.



- Boardwalk and nature center grounds are open dawn to dusk each day. Visitors are welcome.

- Donors to the "All-Aboard for the Boardwalk at Millbrook" project are recognized on signs along the boardwalk.

- Visit www.CentreConnect.org/crpr for more information

- Contact person: Molly Hetrick, Recreation Supervisor

Nature Center, 814-231-3071 or mhetrick@crcog.net



**DIRECTIONS to Millbrook Marsh Nature Center:
614 Puddintown Road in College Township-State College, PA**

From Route 26 East in College Township, turn onto Puddintown Road (opposite "Your Building Center" on E. College Ave.). Millbrook Marsh Nature Center is approximately 1/4 mile on the right. Look for a green and tan Millbrook Marsh Nature Center sign and the large barn with a green roof. Park in the large grassy field lot. **To reach the boardwalk**, follow the grass path that leads past the picnic pavilion toward the marsh. The beginning of the boardwalk is near the covered information kiosk.