

**Sandy Creek Trail  
 Allegheny Valley Trails Association  
 Venango County, PA**

**Project Description:**

No, it doesn't pass through bustling towns. No, it doesn't have amenities. But, those characteristics are just what amplify Sandy Creek Trail's scenic beauty.

In total, this Venango County trail runs 12 miles from Van to Fisherman's Cove. Recently, four of those 12 miles were added with the assistance of a \$314,000 DCNR Keystone grant.

"It has been generally regarded as one of the most scenic trails in the country, with five bridges, one the spectacular Belmar Bridge over the Allegheny River, a series of bridges over the meandering East Sandy Creek," said Jim Holden, President of Allegheny Valley Trails Association (AVTA).

Built in 1907 by John D. Rockefeller and Charles Miller (a local oil man), the Belmar Bridge was used to transport coal from Clarion County to the Lake Erie region. As part of the trail today, this 1,385 foot long structure crosses over the Allegheny River and provides stunning views of the surrounding waterways and forests. The trail also includes a tunnel that was renovated in 2005.

"The refurbished tunnel has received national awards for its unique design - a tunnel within a tunnel filled with 250,000 recycled tires," Holden said.

The innovative tunnel doesn't detract from its scenic surroundings, though. Trail user Sue Hilton agrees.

"I was out there for a run... and it is one of the most beautiful places on earth. The sky was clear and the sun



warm, and the views of the creek from the bridges are quite scenic. I'm fortunate to live close enough to go there several times a week," she said.

The project work for the most recent four-mile installment of the trail included the addition of the paved trail surface, ADA access, signs and landscaping. The first eight miles were completed in 2000 and the next four in 2005 with money from DCNR. The bridge was refurbished later that year.

In addition to Sandy Creek Trail, AVTA also oversees the Allegheny River Trail. Approximately 75% of trail users surveyed in 2006 listed the trails as the main draw to the area.

**Quote:** from the "Trail Utilization Study: Analysis of the trail systems within the Oil Heritage Region" completed in 2006 on [www.avta-trails.org](http://www.avta-trails.org)

"In just four months, the trails attracted almost 83,000 trails users and generated over \$2.22 million in revenues. Over a year, these impacts totaled approximately 161,000 trail users and \$4.31 million in generated income for the Oil Heritage Region. ... The trail system within the Oil Heritage Region is a proven resource that enhances the region's ability to continue to grow toward a more sustainable future."



**Amount of Keystone funding awarded, year and matching sources:**

2005: \$314,000  
 Local Match: \$314,000