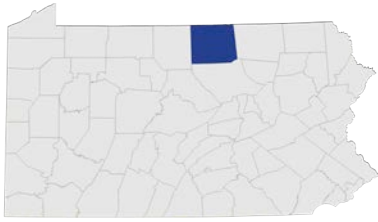


My Story



Falling in Love with Life

Pine Creek Rail Trail

By Linda Stager, Trail User

“Eventually I kept riding further and further. And I loved it. Our trail through the timeless Pine Creek Gorge really is a magical place.”

I retired from a 40-year career in human services in May of 2013. During my career in social work I became a licensed social worker and worked in several capacities. My last job was as the assistant administrator of a large multi-faceted agency.



car rack, drove the three miles to the rail-trail northern terminus and got on my bike. The rest is history, as they say.

I started slowly. I wasn't a very good or strong rider. At first, I practiced getting around the yellow gates that keep motorized vehicles off the trail. Then I rode two miles to a field with cows, and sometimes turkeys, in it. I

would sit there, watch them, and contemplate getting back home. Eventually, I kept riding further and further. And I loved it.

I really enjoyed my work. But after I left, I got a lot healthier. In fact, I lost 100 pounds.

Once I lost the weight, I was intrigued with the bike path that runs along the old railroad bed between Wellsboro, where I live, and Jersey Shore. I had heard about the Pine Creek Rail Trail and I knew it was highly rated. But I hadn't ridden my bicycle in years.

Well, one day I was riding along and I was sort of lost...not that you can get lost on the trail. But I often wondered how far I had ridden, where the next bathroom was, where I should turn around (because I always had to plan for that trip home which was just as far as I had ridden already). And I would see things on the trail that I was curious about.

I asked my husband to ride with me and, although he was always willing, it never happened. So one day, I decided I would figure it out by myself. I loaded the bike on the

What was it? Why was it there? How long had it been there? Did it have historic value? Just a lot of questions.

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And that one day, in particular, I wanted to know where the bathroom was. I remember in frustration, I said to myself, "Somebody ought to write a guidebook to this trail so I will know where the bathrooms are!" When I got home that night I started mulling it over. Perhaps that person could be me. I certainly had the interest and the time. And so I started out on the journey...researching, interviewing, riding...and riding... and writing.

Two years later, *The Pine Creek Rail Trail Guidebook* was published and I found out that a lot of other folks wanted to know the same things about the rail trail that I did. The book helps them enjoy this very special beautiful 62-mile corridor to the fullest. And I am happy about that.

I wrote in the book:

Rich in history and natural beauty, this is a ride through the timeless Pine Creek Valley, where the steps of Native Americans, miners, loggers and families echo close by, just in another dimension, the dimension of time... Each season of the year offers its special view of an untainted, exquisite,

natural wild area... Spend a few hours here and it's easy to imagine the stories of bygone times. Come and join the ghosts of the past and me on a bike ride to remember."

And a visit here IS something to remember. It is special. The Pine Creek Rail Trail affords folks from many states an opportunity for fantastic outdoor activities. People ride and walk here for the exact same reasons I started walking and riding here.

Mountain biking is hard with so many potential obstacles. Road biking is dangerous because of traffic concerns. But riding on the rail trail fits the bill. The trail is safe because it's out of the way of cars traveling at highway speeds. It has limited road crossings and most of its 62 miles is totally off the highway. And all of it is basically flat, so even weak riders like me can ride safely and strongly.

I also love it because it's well groomed. The trail has split rail fencing, mowed areas, established parking and access areas, campgrounds and comfort stations

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(restrooms), all courtesy of DCNR and the State Forest Departments.

It is a trail for everybody. Most any bike will do to ride this rail trail, so there is no need for special equipment, extra gears, or special tires. Just ride. I've seen road bikes on the trail and I've seen spider bikes. And I've seen everything in between, including hybrids, cruisers, and recumbent bikes and trikes. They all work.

And the people riding them? There are toddlers in bike trailers or riding on their caregiver's bike. And preschoolers on tiny bikes with training wheels. There are little kids, big kids, adults, and senior citizens enjoying the trail. Many ride, some walk, but they all seem happy and friendly.

Lastly—and this is the most important quality for many people—the trail is incredibly scenic. There are mountains to see, a pristine large creek with rafters, kayakers, tubers, and fishermen in it, and beautiful mountain runs with waterfalls, all along the trail. There is plenty of wildlife to view. And those beautiful old railroad bridges? There are several. That is typical of most rail trails, but it's a signature trait of the Pine Creek Rail Trail.

Our trail through the timeless Pine Creek Gorge and Valley really is a magical place. I fell in love with it. It is easy to fall in love with. You can too.

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