

Double 'wow' on rail trail

Rosendale railroad span, extension to open Saturday

By John Ferro
Poughkeepsie Journal

ROSENDALE — Most rail trails have a “wow” moment.

Beginning Saturday, the Wallkill Valley Rail Trail in Ulster County will have two new ones, one offering jaw-dropping views and the other a stunning — and refreshing — natural effect.

Saturday will mark the grand re-opening of the Rosendale railroad bridge, the 118-year-old structure that spans 950 feet of the Rondout Creek gorge at a height of 150 feet and last shouldered a train in the

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1970s.

The bridge was closed in 2010 due to unsafe conditions on the wooden pedestrian walkway that at the time only went half-way across.

In its place is a brand-new deck made of recycled composite material and weathered steel railings that match the color of the superstructure. The \$1.5 million project was overseen by the Open Space Institute and the Wallkill Valley Land Trust.

“One of the things that pleased us about the trestle is not only have we made it functional and safe, but it turned out to be a thing of beauty, too,” Bob Anderberg, vice president and general counsel at the Open Space Institute, said Monday.

Anderberg said the rust-colored steel railings “pop” at sunset and the gray decking blends with the colors of nearby Joppenbergh Mountain.

Much of the final installation of the decking was done by volunteers

with professional construction backgrounds.

“It was a great way to get the community involved in this last bit of the trestle and a heartfelt way to finish off this great project,” said Christine DeBoer, executive director of the Wallkill Valley Land Trust.

Saturday’s event also marks the opening of an 11.5-mile northern extension. The 24-mile trail will now run from the southern border of the Town of Gardiner to the Kingston city line. The extension includes a natural feature that is stunning to experience. Just 100 yards north of the trestle is an entrance to a long-abandoned cement mine within Joppenbergh Mountain.

Gushing up from the dark hole below is a constant, voluminous flow of 55-degree air, creating an all-natural air-conditioning effect that serves as a reinvigorating rest stop for anyone — even on the hottest days.

The extension adds to the valley’s ever-growing network of rail trails. The Wallkill rail trail will eventually extend south to the Village of Walden in Orange County.

Plans are being considered to link it through New Paltz to the Hudson Valley Rail Trail in Highland, the Walkway Over the Hudson and the Dutchess Rail Trail.

From Kingston, Anderberg said, links one day could include the Ulster and Delaware rail bed.

“This,” he said while gazing out from high above the Rondout, “is probably going to be one of the premier rail trail networks in the state of New York.”

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IF YOU GO

What: Rosendale trestle grand reopening.

When: June 29. Times are as follows:

» 11:30 a.m.: Ribbon-cutting at the north end of the trestle. Park at Binnewater Kiln parking area on Binnewater Road.

» Noon-3 p.m.: Music at Willow Kiln Park in Rosendale.

» 3 p.m.: Parade to trestle from Willow Kiln Park featuring Rosendale Brass Band.

Information: <http://wallkillvalleylt.org/>

