

Driving the trail enhancing the visitors experience



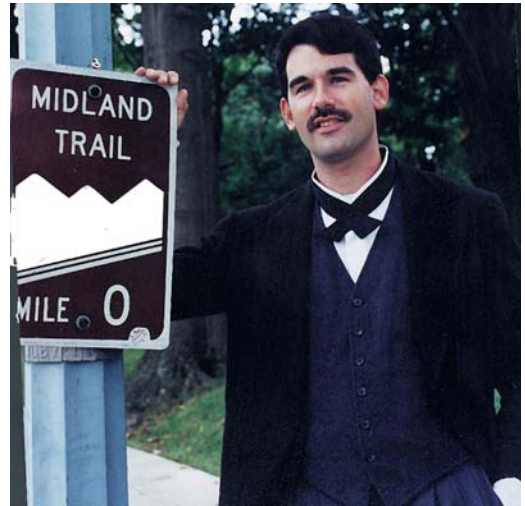
Billboards upstage beautiful mountain scenery, breaking the traveler's relationship with nature. Coal and timber trucks bigger than houses and with dusty wakes travel sections of the Trail day and night. Junkyards, large billboards and dilapidated structures challenge and undermine visitors' satisfaction with their Trail experience. MTSHA strives to lead a variety of interests towards a unified vision of peaceful green.

Signage

Except for mile-markers, signage along the Trail is rather inconsistent and needs attention. Signs fall into four categories: directional, informational, interpretive, and advertising.

I. DIRECTIONAL:

Signage in this class is adequate, and marks out the number designation as well as cardinal directions. The Trail also displays prominently brown mile-markers which indicate the distance traveled from the State Capitol at Charleston; this signage is consistent throughout the Trail's 119 miles.



route marker

Mile markers indicating the distance to and from the State Capitol provide Midland Trail visitors with a foothold for directions. The MT Destination Guide uses these Mile Markers to direct visitors to points of interest and services.

II. INFORMATIONAL:

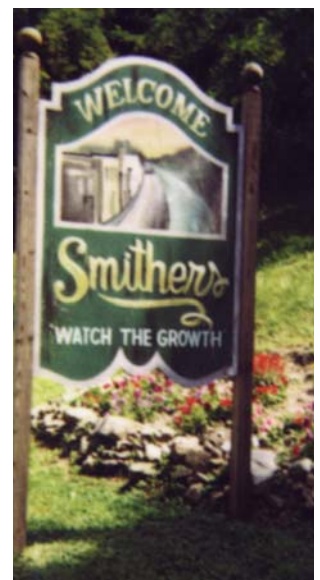
Since its designation as a Scenic Highway, the Trail has displayed easily recognizable brown background signs with white lettering and the Trail logo. These signs fall into three categories:



- A. General informational signs that indicate that the visitor is traveling the Midland Trail.
- B. Specific informational signs which indicate some point of interest, such as a museum or historic home.
- C. Location of the Tourist Information Centers.

Signage in this category is not consistent and some areas have little or none.

Some points of interest are not indicated with the specific marker. One such site is the Old Stone House in Belle. Although there is a posted sign, there is no clear signage which directs the visitor to the appropriate turn-off for the house (see above). In cases such as this one, the Association has intentions of correcting deficiencies either in absence of signage or inadequate signage. Signage does not indicate all points of "intrinsic quality" interest and visitor services like restaurants, lodging and comfort facilities.



Above: Towns along the Trail have taken their own signage initiative with artistic signs such as these.

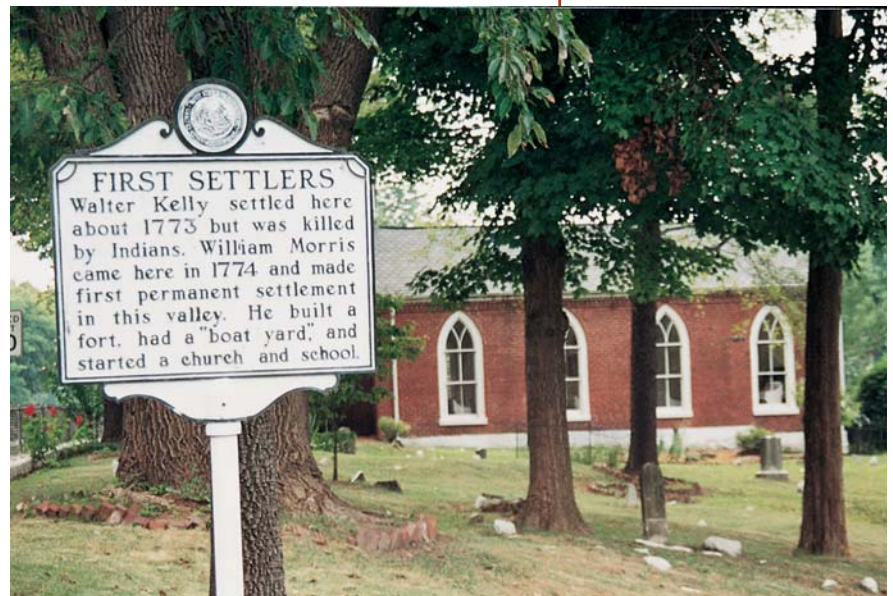
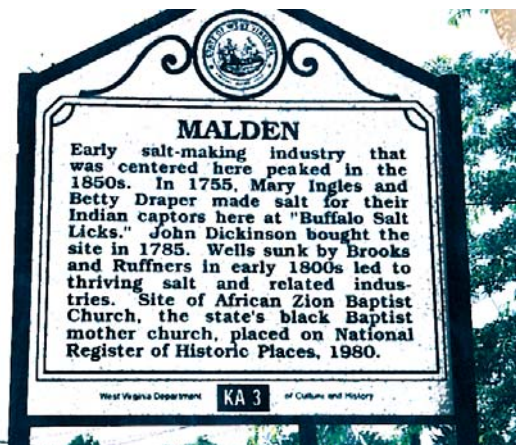
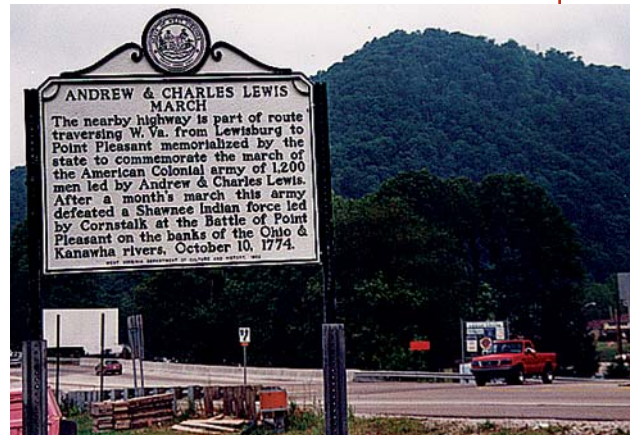
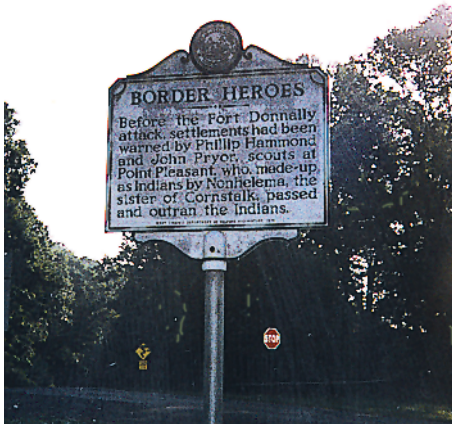


III. INTERPRETIVE:

Historical markers placed by the WV Division of Culture and History are limited. While these signs are long-lasting, they are often not visible or easily readable from the car. The drawing to the right is an example of the updated recommended interpretive signage.



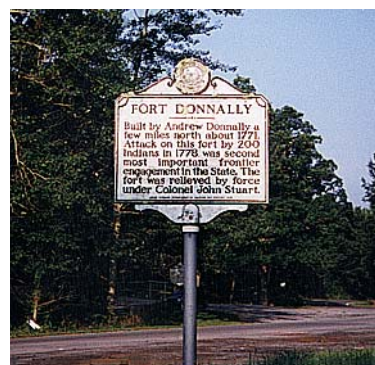
interpretation sign



gateway marker

RECOMMENDATION FOR GATEWAYS:

Public input has also recommended "gateway" signage in certain areas such as the entrance to the Trail at the western (Charleston at the State Capitol) and at the eastern (White Sulphur Springs/Virginia border) gateways. Sam Black Church is another potential location.



Outdoor Advertising

IV. ADVERTISING:

If we must have billboards, companies should be encouraged to provide signs which feature a "heritage look" with lattice and other period type features.

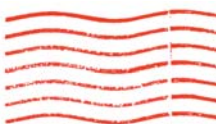


The Association is on record as opposing the use of any large billboard advertising, especially any advertising in open vistas which will obstruct or distract from the scenic qualities of the Trail. At least one town's citizen's group along the Trail successfully opposed a plan to place billboards outside the town.

Although there are a few large billboards along the Trail, this

occurrence is limited. Most advertising is restricted to small, unobtrusive separate billboards or those which are attached to business buildings or are standing marquees on business properties.

The Association is also on record as supporting "segmentation", the restriction of outdoor advertising to designated segments of the route. The West Virginia Commissioner of Highways, by Order dated 11/30/98, prohibited additional outdoor advertising on state byways except in identified segments.



Signage Plans

The Association's plan for placement and number of highway signs builds on an already established signage system.

At present, the traveler has directional signs, informational signs, and mile-markers which cover the entire Trail from Charleston to White Sulphur Springs. Except for mile-markers, signs tend to be situated in one place, in a vertical row, rather than scattered. Additionally, and significant especially in the less developed natural scenic areas, these signs and markers are colored brown, which permits the traveler to gather information while allowing the sign to blend with the surroundings, thus minimizing distraction. In some instances, small travel information signs are appended right underneath the state's green informational/ mileage signs.

The Association is committed to attracting the foreign visitor, and, in particular, knows that the state of West Virginia is trying to attract Canadian tourists; many of these use the state's Route 19, which intersects with the Trail at Hico. Studies show that European tourism is growing in the United States; the highest European tourist population is German. Plans call for signs in French, German, and Spanish. The 1998-99 Destination Guide includes welcomes in French and German.

Interstate 64/77, Route 19, and Route 219 are all major gateways onto the Trail. It is recommended that Interstate 64/77 become a Gateway, as it intersects with the Trail at Charleston. The Association intends to place signs on these as well as the Trail for guidance on and off the Trail. Gateways will be clearly defined.

In April 1998, the Association voted to request extension of the designation

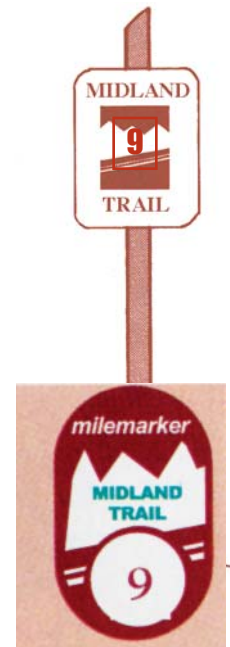
"Midland Trail" westward from Charleston to the Kentucky border. If the extension is approved it will necessary to renumber the route starting at the Virginian Border and marking the mileage to the Kentucky border. The Association is considering the alternative of a "0" mile-marker at the Virginia border.

Augmenting this signage system will be the use of roadside kiosks which provide information, direction, and interpretation.

Signage will actually serve two Midland Trails, one for cars and one for bikes. Our program also contemplates signage for biking paths which parallel the road. Signs can indicate distance and length of the proposed bike route; locations of bikers' picnic areas, rest spots, and entrances to other bike and/or hiking paths; directional information and historical informational markers for points of interest; and potential crosswalks (see below). Informational kiosks would enhance the biker's mini-trip.



Signs such as this one are necessary for proposed Trail biking routes.



Example of how the Milemarker was adapted into a logo for use in the Destination Midland Guide. Visitors coordinate the Guide with the Mileage Marker Road Signs to easily locate points of interest. As The Trail expands westward, the mile-marker signs will require renumbering to include the extension.

MIDLAND TRAIL UPGRADES TO REDUCE HAZARDS

Speed Changes with Road Changes

Eliminating surprises and offering a predictable driving and travel experience over the Trail is a goal of the Association. The Trail itself has gone through periods of evolution on its western sector in Kanawha County where three and four lane sections have been added atop the original Trail. In these situations a drivers speed may change significantly over short distances. The role of good signage to protect drivers from hazards is key in these situations.

Hazards for Foot Traffic

In some cases on the Western Sector in Malden, Rand, Dupont City, and Belle, the Trail runs through communities where sidewalks are limited or non-existent.

In these situations road speeds need to provide for the inclusion of tourists who are unfamiliar with traffic and slower speeds are needed in these situations particularly in the community of Malden in Kanawha County.

Beware Roadside Vendors

Traditionally, roadside vendors have been a part of the ambiance of the Midland Trail. This may take the form of garden produce or velvet Elvis paintings. In any event these vendors provide a color, flavor and culture to the Trail reminding us of An earlier time. However, it is important that pull offs for roadside marketing be designated and signed to assure safety to travelers wishing to experience this roadside phenomena.

Share the Road Signage

From the state Capital to Riverside High School (a total of 14.5 miles) good cycling opportunities with the addition of signage to " Share the Roads with a Bicycle." Piedmont Road and new route 60 runs within feet of the Midland Trail offering cyclists access and views of the original Trail.

Planned Trail Widening

The Midland Trail Scenic Highway Association has gone on record as being supportive of the widening of the Trail from Shrewsbury to Montgomery. It has also indicated that historic properties and personal safety of citizens and tourists must be considered and accommodated in any road modification.

Safety and Traffic lights in Tourist areas

The addition of the Midland Trail Travel Information Center at Cabin Creek Quilts in Malden, Booker T. Washington's Cabin, The Salt Village, and the Women's Park has resulted in increased foot traffic. Visitors from the Midland Trail Information Center must cross this heavy traffic area without the aid of a traffic light.



T I M E

F R A M E

Short Term or Immediate Improvements -- 2001

Areas known for hazardous conditions such as a coal preparation plant where trucks enter and leave as well as sections frequented by timber haulers should be clearly marked for travelers unfamiliar with the Trail.

Foot traffic along the Trail should be provided with walkways. Walkways which presently exist such as the one from the Capitol to Daniel Boone Park need upgrading and maintenance.

Signage in high accident areas should be reevaluated.

Pavement markings should be reevaluated along the entire length of the Trail

Entrance and Exits to parking areas should be well defined where possible.

Object hazards should be protected by guard rails.

Within Five Years --- 2005

Truck Lanes should be provided or widened as needed.

Shoulders should be upgraded at several points along the Trail.

Underpass entrances and exits at Belle and Malden which regularly need upgrades.

Long Term --- 2010

Development of businesses which are compatible with the long range vision

For the trail as well as discouraging starts which detract from the development

Objectives of the CMP and its supporting interest groups.

Accident Data

U.S. Route 60 (Midland Trail) Charleston to Virginia Line, 10/1/95 - 9/30/98

Highway Section	Length	Number of Accidents	*Accidents Per Year	*Accident Rate
Kanawha County U.S. 60 (Charleston to Malden)	3.19	128	42	245
Kanawha County 1-77 (U.S. 60 follows 1-77)	1.14	26	9	45
Kanawha County CR 60/12 (Malden to Belle)	5.97	92	31	253
Kanawha County U.S. 60 (Belle to Fayette Co./L)	15.37	326	109	171
Fayette County U.S. 60 (Co./L to Greenbrier Co./L)	46.06	320	107	136
Greenbrier County U.S.. 60 (Co/L to 1-64)	43.80	479	160	221
Greenbrier County 1-64 (U.S. 60 follows 1-64 to Virginia)	2.57	24	- 8	77
Totals (All Sections Combined)	118.1	1,395	465	179

Legend

*Accident Rate = Number of accidents per 100 million vehicle miles

"Accidents Per Year = Based on yearly average from 10/1/95 to 9/30/98



Accident Rates

WEST VIRGINIA DIVISION OF HIGHWAYS STATEWIDE AVERAGE ACCIDENT RATES, 1995-1997

<u>HIGHWAY TYPE</u> <u>*FATAL</u>	<u>*ACCIDENT</u>	<u>*INJURY</u>	<u>*PDO</u>
TOTAL INTERSTATE (Combined Urban and Rural) 0.97	68	38	43
RURAL INTERSTATE 1.03	63	37	39
URBAN INTERSTATE 0.53	80	36	55
TOTAL PRIMARY (All U.S. & State Numbered Routes) 2.30	213	122	133
RURAL PRIMARY 2.98	193	124	113
RURAL PRIMARY - TWO LANES	199		
RURAL PRIMARY - TWO LANES 16-17'	272		
RURAL PRIMARY - TWO LANES 18-22'	212		
RURAL PRIMARY - TWO LANES OVER 22'	192		
RURAL PRIMARY - FOUR LANES	106		
RURAL PRIMARY - FOUR LANES CONTROLLED ACCESS	88		
URBAN PRIMARY (All U.S. & State Numbered Routes) 1.20	326	153	225
URBAN PRIMARY - TWO LANES	319		
URBAN PRIMARY - FOUR LANES	328		
COUNTY AND LOCAL ROUTES OVER 5010 ADT (State Maintained Urban & Rural Combined) 2.05	253	139	158
RURAL COUNTY ROUTES OVER 500 ADT LESS THAN 16'	253		
RURAL COUNTY ROUTES OVER 500 ADT 16-17'	283		
RURAL COUNTY ROUTES OVER 500 ADT 18-22'	264		
URBAN COUNTY ROUTES OVER 500 ADT - TWO LANES	171		
COUNTY ROUTES LESS THAN 500 ADT	577		
STATEWIDE TOTALS 2.25	271	134	181

*3 YEAR ACCIDENT RATE PER HUNDRED MILLION VEHICLE MILES
MT 1997 TRANSPORTATION PLANNING DIVISION

Traffic Conditions

The Association is committed to creating and maintaining safe roads for all visitors both in autos and as pedestrians.

The Midland Trail is the only route for tourist, commercial or industrial traffic along several stretches of the Trail. At mile-marker 6, clear signage and informational materials will aid pleasure-travelers on the Trail.

TIME AND SPACE

A second strategy is restriction of hours of operation, for example, to daylight hours. Additionally, the potential exists for restriction of certain segments to non-commercial traffic only where alternate routes exist; such places include Charleston and Malden, the Hico/Route 19 intersection, and Lewisburg.

THE ANSTED SOLUTION

Ansted is already addressing the problem of providing safe paths for joggers, walkers, and cyclists with several miles of hiking/biking trails through the Hawks Nest State Park forest.

ROADSIDE PATHS

The potential exists for development of separate walking/biking/in-line skating paths which run close along the Trail's shoulder. One such place is in Charleston between the State Capitol (MM 0) and Daniel Boone Park (MM 1) and Malden (MM 4). At the other end, space permits another such path between White Sulphur Springs and downtown Lewisburg and which would pass The Greenbrier Resort and start at the trailhead of the Greenbrier River Trail in Caldwell.



Slow-moving coal trucks pull onto the Midland Trail from the coal tipples like this one at Cannelton.

SAFETY UPGRADES Industrial Area Signage- HAZARDS!!!

Identification of Trail areas with heavy coal, timber or trailer truck traffic, as well as other potential hazards, is an Association priority.

The increase in visitor traffic to the Trail has presented safety issues as it relates both to particular hazards in specific areas and to inherent characteristics of the Trail. Unregulated auto and truck traffic in the Malden Historic District presents safety concerns to school groups and tourists at cultural sites on the Trail there.

Cannelton's mining tippie, with coal trucks entering the Trail, has seen many accidents; a recent one was fatal. The continuous movement of large trucks at this mining prep site to and from the Trail presents a special hazard both to locals and particularly to the tourist. Also, these trucks are sprayed with water to keep dust down before they enter the Trail, which creates wet and potentially perilous road conditions. Autos and coal, logging and transport trucks use the extremely winding and hilly route of Gauley Mountain, between mile-markers 39 and 45. Strengthened warnings in this area would prepare travelers for potential hazards on this stretch of the Trail; many of the Trail's snaky curves border on high, precipitous cliff-like drops which overlook the New River Gorge. Clear markings at a train crossing near Glen Ferris and timbering areas of Fayette and Greenbrier counties would permit travelers to use additional caution for these conditions.



The Trail: Modifications and Design

Following are proposals for modification of the roadway, evaluations of the design standards, and how these changes will affect the Trail's intrinsic qualities.

THE MALDEN/ BELLE PROBLEM

In at least the past three years, heavy rains have temporarily flooded both the Malden and Belle underpasses. These underpasses are the only entrances and exits to the Trail which parallels U.S. 60 at these locations. Traffic is either trapped with no way out or must drive through deep water. The only alternate route out is a dirt road on private property, which connects Malden Drive and U.S. 60. Even with this alternative, Malden and Belle face a critical problem: flooding or destruction of these underpasses could prevent the provision of basic services to both towns in emergencies such as a likely chemical leak from the Belle facility.

The Association endorses the concept of creating another paved connecting route with the highway.

Such a route could actually enhance visitor experience in Malden. Presently, Malden Drive has no traffic control devices, and not only do accidents occur frequently in Malden, but traffic tends to speed through the town. Adding traffic control and an additional route would permit visitors increased safety as they walk about town to visit the town's intrinsic qualities.

Trucks which use Malden Drive/DuPont Avenue can endanger visitors who wish to visit Malden and the Old Stone House in Belle. The Association endorses a design of alternate pull-on/pull-off areas at Belle for commercial

traffic connected with DuPont plant. This area would divert trucking from the Malden area and the Old Stone House and pose no change to, but rather an enhancement for visitor experience at, the intrinsic qualities in this area.

A FOUR-LANE HIGHWAY

Just east of Quincy Mall, a new bridge connects the Trail with I-64/77 across the Kanawha River. The immediate area around the Trail side of the Bridge is 4-lane. The Association has gone on record as supporting an extension of this 4-lane ten miles east to Montgomery in order to draw tourism eastward onto the Trail. It has also been suggested that new highways be planned for the tops of the mountains, saving scarce flat land in the Kanawha Valley for other purposes.

Visitor Services

I. TOURIST INFORMATION

SERVICES:

A. TOURIST INFORMATION CENTERS:

The Trail has three official Centers, one each at Malden, Gauley Bridge, and Lewisburg. Visitors can also receive information and guidance at Hawks Nest State Park Lodge and the State Capitol.

B. DESTINATION GUIDE:

The Association has produced a 64-page, full-color Destination Guide which indicates all visitor amenities and experiences along the Trail.

The Association works actively with the state Department of Tourism by making the Guide available to the Department's toll-free tourist informational hotline, 1-800-CALL-WVA.

C. AUDIOTAPE:

A history informational audiotape for the car stereo is in progress.

D. A WEBSITE:

Potential tourists are able to visit the Trail in cyberspace at www.wvmidland-trail.com. The WebSite follows the format of the MT Destination Guide and will in its second phase have opportunity for all advertising supporters of the Destination Guide to link with the Association's address.

E. KIOSKS:

The Association is building several informational kiosks, along the Trail. Recommended: In the future we hope to enhance these billboards by adding audio-information which tourists will be able to access on their car radio.

F. LOCAL LODGING TELEVISION INFO CHANNELS: (Recommended:)

Local TV could carry continuous information regarding current and local events and broadcast to all local hotels, motels, and campgrounds.

II. Lodging:

The greatest amount of lodging is available at the gateways of Charleston and Lewisburg/ White Sulphur Springs, and includes a number of historic inns, bed-and-breakfasts, two motels, chain hotels, full-amenity cabins, and campgrounds. The world-famous Greenbrier Resort Hotel sits at the White Sulphur trailhead. Two state parks, Hawks Nest and Babcock, also contain lodging in the form of cabins and lodge rooms. Other chain motels are planned for the Smithers and Quincy area within five years.

Public input has indicated a greater need for lodging, campgrounds, and RV pull-offs.

The Association can encourage travel with a replication of Europe's Youth Hostel Program with a Midland Trail Hostel Program.

III. DINING:

Restaurant options include everything from "mom-and-pop" concerns to recognizable chain names to a number of roadside cafes. Fine dining includes the formal experience of The Greenbrier; a handful of very nice restaurants in Lewisburg; fine and casual fare at the Glen Ferris Inn and Hawk's Nest, and numerous restaurant options in Charleston. Surveys consistently show that this area is underserved in restaurants, even in Charleston, which has the most options. Often the problem along the Trail is signage; passing tourists do not realize, for instance, that there are dining options at the rafting companies or even at Hawks Nest State Park.



and Accommodations

IV. RECREATION:

Plenty of opportunities, including white-water rafting, hiking, biking, golf, nature walking (trails at Ansted), camping, horse-back riding, and fishing. There are a number of public accesses to recreational areas and a number of parks. The Trail also runs by several state forests, Kanawha and Greenbrier, and connects with a 70-mile-long biking path, the Greenbrier River Trail.

V. CULTURAL/ HERITAGE HISTORY/ EDUCATIONAL:

Numerous opportunities for enrichment in these areas. The Trail has museums, historic homes, historic churches, a salt-worker's heritage park, historical drama, musical productions, traditional arts and crafts festivals, and arts programs. See "Intrinsic Qualities" section.

The Trail's vision also contemplates an artists' colony at Gauley Bridge and the state's first women's interpretive park at Malden.

VI: SHOPPING:

The Trail offers the visitor exceptional opportunities to purchase specialty items handmade in the Appalachian tradition: two fine art galleries in Lewisburg and a gallery in Lookout; arts and crafts shops; at least three shops which feature hand-made quilts and crafted items; at least four food specialty item stores; several flea markets; antique stores, mostly in Lewisburg; variety shops; the indoor fine shopping section at the Greenbrier Hotel in White Sulphur Springs.

VII. ENTERTAINMENT:

Limited, but what exists provides the visitor with some unique experiences. Includes movie theaters and night spots at the trailheads, Greenbrier Theater, riverboat cruises in Charleston, Fairlea's West Virginia State Fair, Hawks Nest dinner theater, and Mountain Stage's musical productions.

VIII. RESTROOMS:

There is a great need for more restrooms across the entire Trail, and particularly in Fayette and Greenbrier Counties.

The Trail has a few gas stations and one state park with public restrooms. Visitor Centers provide this amenity, but these are only open during business hours and have no roadside signage indicating this amenity.

Sections of the Midland Trail lack basic services and amenities. Some places have no restaurants, souvenir shops, or core businesses which would draw and support the influx of tourists which we desire. As part of its management strategy, the Association is committed to attracting and keeping businesses whose goods and services support tourist traffic and encouraging new business growth.

Anomalous Intrusions

The Trail's main anomalous intrusions are unsightly industrial operations and dilapidated structures.

In the Upper Kanawha Valley, some industrial operations detract from views of the river and the mountains. The Association has embraced the concept of vegetative screening. One enterprise, a junk reclamation facility, breaks the landscape and a view of the Kanawha River with heaps of materials which rise above a fence. One solution to this intrusion is the planting of pine trees and establishment of a roadside park with shelter and picnic tables.

On segments of the Trail, especially in Fayette and Kanawha Counties, are derelict structures which intrude on the Trail's natural beauty. At a curve overlooking the Sewell Plateau stands the dilapidated, abandoned Lee's Tree Tavern, a two-story cinder block structure. Discussion has called for demolition so that the area can become an official Trail pull-off. The Tavern obstructs a view of the Greenbrier Valley which is scenic for its expansive vista and its historical significance to Civil War tourism.

In Greenbrier County, a quarrying operation very close to the Trail needs a vegetative screen. While pines have been planted, more and larger trees are needed to conceal this site effectively.



At a curve overlooking the Sewell Plateau stands the dilapidated, abandoned Lee's Tree Tavern, a two-story cinder block structure, intruding on the Trail's natural beauty.



Raleigh Junk a junk reclamation facility, in the Upper Kanawha Valley, breaks the landscape and a view of the Kanawha River with heaps of materials which rise above a fence.