

From Trail to Tap:

A Collaborative Celebration of the Pine Creek Rail Trail

When a community's greatest assets are its landscapes, its people, and its sense of place, the most meaningful economic development often happens when those assets come together.



The label features a Pine Creek Rail Trail-inspired design created by New Trail Brewing Co. to celebrate the trail and its designation as Pennsylvania's 2026 Trail of the Year.

That is the idea behind a new collaboration between New Trail Brewing Co., Wellsboro House Restaurant & Brewing Co., Tioga County, and WeConservePA to create a Pine Creek Rail Trail-themed Amber Lager celebrating the trail's designation as Pennsylvania's 2026 Trail of the Year.

The beer is more than a beverage. It is a tangible expression of a place, a celebration of an achievement, and an example of how businesses, government, and conservation organizations can work together to tell a stronger story about a community.

The Pine Creek Rail Trail is already one of the region's most important recreational and tourism assets. The 65-mile trail travels through the Appalachian landscape of Tioga and Lycoming counties and attracts more than 44,000 visitors annually, generating more than \$5 million in local economic impact. In February 2026, the Pennsylvania Department of Conservation and Natural Resources named it Pennsylvania's Trail of the Year, recognizing its recreational, cultural, and economic importance.

The timing of this collaboration is particularly significant. The recently completed northern extension connects the Pine Creek Rail Trail directly with Wellsboro, creating a stronger physical and economic connection between the trail and the community. The project was specifically designed to strengthen access to downtown businesses, restaurants, hotels, and other community destinations.

A Trail Becomes a Brand

Places have brands whether they intentionally create them or not. For Tioga County, the Pine Creek Rail Trail is one of those defining assets. It evokes images of cycling beneath towering moun-

tains, the Pine Creek Gorge, historic railroad corridors, small communities, outdoor adventure, and the welcoming towns that provide places to eat, stay, shop, and relax.

That is place-based branding: taking the characteristics that make a location distinctive and turning them into a recognizable story that people can experience, remember, and share.

A Pine Creek Rail Trail Amber Lager gives that story another physical form.

Someone might discover the beer at a restaurant or brewery, see the trail imagery and story on the package, and become curious about the place behind it. A visitor who has ridden the trail might take a can home as a souvenir. A local resident might purchase it because it represents something they are proud of. A business might feature it as part of a larger Pine Creek Rail

Trail experience.

In each case, the product helps extend the trail's identity beyond the trail itself.

Collaboration Creates Something No One Partner Could Create Alone

The strength of the project comes from the different roles each partner brings to the table. New Trail Brewing Co. brings brewing expertise, production capacity, distribution, and an established reputation for creating beers connected to outdoor culture. The brewery already has a strong lager portfolio, including its Crisp Amber Lager, demonstrating its ability to produce a malt-forward, approachable beer suited to the concept.

Wellsboro House Restaurant & Brewing Co. brings a distinctly Tioga County identity and a direct connection to Wellsboro's hospitality economy. As a restaurant and brewpub, it provides a natural place for visitors and residents to encounter the collaboration as part of the broader experience of visiting the community.

Tioga County brings the public-sector perspective and a commitment to economic development, tourism, and strengthening the communities along the trail corridor. County involvement helps demonstrate that outdoor recreation is not simply an amenity—it is an economic asset capable of supporting businesses, jobs, investment, and community vitality.

And WeConservePA brings a statewide conservation and trails perspective. Its work connects local trail projects with the larger story of Pennsylvania's greenways, trails, conservation, and outdoor recreation network. WeConservePA emphasizes the role

trails play in connecting people and places.

Together, these organizations represent four different but complementary pieces of the same economic ecosystem: business, hospitality, government, and conservation.

That is what makes the collaboration powerful.

“The Pine Creek Rail Trail is one of Tioga County’s greatest assets, and being named Pennsylvania’s 2026 Trail of the Year gives us an incredible opportunity to celebrate it and build on the economic impact it already has in our communities. This collaboration is a great example of what can happen when local businesses, tourism, conservation, and county government work together. It helps tell the story of the trail, but just as importantly, it gives visitors another reason to discover our small businesses, restaurants, communities, and everything else that makes Tioga County such a special place.”

— Tioga County Commissioners

Economic Development You Can Hold in Your Hand

Economic development is sometimes discussed in terms of infrastructure, grants, business recruitment, or large capital investments. Those things matter. But economic development also happens through the creation of experiences that encourage people to visit, stay longer, spend money, and return. Trails are particularly effective at creating these connections.

A cyclist does not simply use a trail and disappear. They may need lodging. They may stop for breakfast. They may purchase a bike repair or outdoor product. They may visit a brewery or restaurant after their ride. They may shop downtown. They may return for another weekend.

The Pine Creek Rail Trail’s connection to Wellsboro strengthens exactly this kind of economic activity. State officials have described the trail connection as a way to support local businesses, tourism, and community recreation.

The Amber Lager can become one small but memorable piece of that larger visitor economy.

It gives visitors another reason to engage with local businesses. It creates opportunities for restaurants, breweries, retailers, tourism organizations, and other businesses to tell the Pine Creek story. And because a packaged product can travel, the economic and promotional reach of the project can extend well beyond the trail corridor.

Awareness That Travels

One of the greatest advantages of a collaborative product is its ability to introduce the area to people who may not yet know it. A trail is geographically fixed. A story about the trail doesn’t have to be.

A can of beer can travel from Wellsboro to Williamsport, from Pennsylvania to another state, or from a visitor’s vacation cooler back home. Every time someone encounters the name Pine Creek Rail Trail, the product can create a moment of curiosity:

- Where is this trail?
- What makes it special?
- What else is there to do in Tioga County?

That is valuable destination marketing.

The Pine Creek Rail Trail already has impressive numbers behind its name, but numbers alone rarely create an emotional connection. Branding helps turn statistics into a story. The Trail of the Year designation provides an especially timely story—one that communicates recognition, quality, outdoor adventure, and regional pride.

The beer essentially becomes a brand ambassador for the place.

Building a Culture of Cross-Collaboration

Perhaps the most important outcome of the project is not the beer itself. It is the model. Communities competing for visitors, residents, entrepreneurs, and investment cannot rely on individual organizations telling isolated stories. The strongest destinations increasingly understand that their assets are interconnected.

- The trail supports tourism.
- Tourism supports restaurants and lodging.
- Restaurants and breweries create gathering places.
- Gathering places reinforce community identity.
- Community identity strengthens destination branding.
- Destination branding encourages people to visit.
- And visitation supports economic activity.

That is a cycle in which everyone has a role.

Cross-collaboration allows organizations to move beyond simply promoting their own individual interests and instead promote the place as a whole. When that happens, the success of one organization can contribute to the success of another.

A cyclist who comes to Tioga County for the Pine Creek Rail Trail is a potential customer for a restaurant. A restaurant customer may discover the trail. A brewery customer may learn about Wellsboro. A visitor who buys the Amber Lager may become a future visitor to the region.

The connections multiply.

Celebrating a Trail—and the Community Around It

The Pine Creek Rail Trail’s selection as Pennsylvania’s 2026 Trail of the Year is an accomplishment worth celebrating. But it is also an opportunity. It is an opportunity to tell a bigger story about Tioga County and the Pennsylvania Wilds. It is an opportunity to introduce new audiences to the region. And it is an opportunity to demonstrate what can happen when organizations with different missions find common ground around a sense place.

The Pine Creek Rail Trail Amber Lager captures that idea in a particularly approachable way.

- It celebrates the trail.
- It celebrates local business.
- It celebrates conservation and outdoor recreation.
- It celebrates Wellsboro and Tioga County.

And, perhaps most importantly, it celebrates the idea that a community is stronger when its assets and its people work together.

A trail can take you somewhere. A great place gives you a reason to stay.

This collaboration is about making sure that when people discover the Pine Creek Rail Trail, they also discover the communities, businesses, landscapes, and people that make the journey worth remembering.

Trail of the Year Celebration Schedule

ENTIRE MONTH OF SEPTEMBER: Pine Creek Rail Trail themed Gallery at the Patterson Trailhead **Patterson Trailhead, 32 Fellows Ave., Wellsboro, PA**

In celebration of the Trail of the Year designation and Trail Month, the Gmeiner Art & Cultural Center is proud to present a Pine Creek Rail Trail–Themed Art Gallery at the Patterson Trailhead Building. Featuring works by local and regional artists, the exhibit will showcase the beauty, history, and spirit of the trail through a variety of artistic styles and perspectives.

THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 24: Trail Tales & Toasts – Trail of the Year Networking Reception **Wellsboro House, 34 Charleston Street, Wellsboro, PA**

- **5PM–7PM, Connect with trail supporters, community partners, outdoor recreation advocates, and local businesses while celebrating this exciting recognition.**
- **Debut of the Pine Creek Rail Trail themed Beer:** This project is a collaborative effort between WeConservePA, Tioga County, New Trail Brewing Company, and Wellsboro House. This special amber lager features a custom label honoring the Pine Creek Rail Trail that winds through both Tioga and Lycoming Counties. The project celebrates the trail through regional promotion while highlighting the importance of Tioga County's outdoor recreation economy. Join us at the Trail Tales & Toasts Networking Reception to raise a glass to the visionaries and trailblazers whose dedication helped transform their dream into one of Pennsylvania's premier rail trails.

FRIDAY, SEPTEMBER 25: Trail of the Year Celebration **Patterson Trailhead, 32 Fellows Ave., Wellsboro, PA**

- **9AM–11AM, Informational Booths & Educational Activities**
Student clubs and organizations from Tioga County (grades 7–12) will rotate through hands-on educational activity stations led by a variety of organizations, including DCNR State Parks, Northcentral PA Conservancy, PA State Game Commission, Tiadaghton Audubon Society, Tioga County Conservation District, PA Wilds Astronomy Club, This Is My Quest, Inc., Mill Cove Environmental Center, PA Wilds Center for Entrepreneurship, Lumber Heritage Region, PA Route 6 Alliance, Keystone Trails Association, Pine Creek Seed Farm Corn Maze, Wellsboro Robotics Team, Visit Potter-Tioga, and more!
- **11AM–12:30PM, Official Trail of the Year Celebration featuring Guests of the Trail**
 - Cindy Adams Dunn, Secretary, Pennsylvania Department of Conservation and Natural Resources
 - Brett Hollern, Vice Chair of PA Trails Advisory Committee (PTAC)
 - Nathan Reigner, Director of Outdoor Recreation
 - Wilson Consulting – Howeville Bridge Preservation
- **12:30PM, “Refuel Without Leaving the Trail Town of Wellsboro. Stay Local!” Lunch Opportunity**

FRIDAY, SEPTEMBER 25: Tree Planting at Historic Elm Site **Historic Elm Site, 114 Main, Wellsboro, PA**

- **1PM, A Princeton American Elm (*Ulmus americana* ‘Princeton’)** has been selected to replace the historic American Elm that was removed this past June 2026. This cultivated variety of American Elm was introduced in 1922 by Princeton Nurseries in New Jersey and has shown tolerance to Dutch Elm Disease for more than a century.

SATURDAY, SEPTEMBER 26: Trail of the Year Community Day **Patterson Trailhead, 32 Fellows Ave., Wellsboro, PA**

- **10AM–2PM, Informational Booths & Educational Activities**
5K Run/Walk & 10K Bike Event, Hosted by the Tioga County Trail, Park & Recreation Authority

REGISTRATION:

Trail of the Year Celebration Ride: https://www.strava.com/clubs/680584/group_events/3529284352540513634

Trail of the Year Celebration 5K: https://www.strava.com/clubs/680584/group_events/3529283943990913874

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For details about the Trail of the Year Celebration, visit www.tiogacountypa.us or scan the QR code to view the Facebook event page.