

Vandals target Rails-to-Trails project – again

Vandals struck again at the entrance to the Greater Hazleton Rails-to-Trail project off Route 93 in Hazle Township earlier this week.

State police at Hazleton said vandals “removed and damaged” a wooden post and two reflectors at the site near Stockton Road.

The incidents happened between 2 p.m. Tuesday and 8 a.m. Thursday, troopers said.

No all-terrain vehicles or other motorized vehicles are allowed on the trail, which winds out through a mostly forested area toward Ashmore.

And signs at the trail’s entrance warn ATV riders away, troopers said.

“Anyone observed riding ATVs or motor vehicles on the trail will be prosecuted” by the Greater Hazleton Civic Partnership, the developer of the recreational path, troopers said.

Troopers have investigated similar criminal activity at the trail’s entrance.

In one instance, an ATV or other vehicle was driven on the trail, tearing up its surface. And garbage was dumped near the entrance in another case.

Volunteers with the civic partnership have spent many hours cleaning the area. Their work was augmented recently by the efforts of students enrolled in the Hazleton Area School District’s alternative education curriculum.

The trail’s grand opening is scheduled for May 15.

Civic partnership Executive Director Bob Skulsky could not be reached Thursday afternoon for comment on the vandalism.

ATV riders frequently rode their vehicles through the area, illegally crossing Route 93 from one informal trail to another.

It is illegal in Pennsylvania to ride an ATV on a public roadway open to cars and other vehicles.