

Partnership panel on trail of hiking site

By **JIM DINO**
Standard-Speaker

Members of a Greater Hazleton Civic Partnership committee charged with identifying the potential of a former railroad bed to be developed as a walking and hiking trail were back out in the woods Saturday morning.

But this Saturday was important, as the group took a first-hand look at the last of five potential trails.

Drew McGill, leader of the group, said Saturday's trek was important, because a representative from a state agency will visit the area later this month to help identify a trail the state will help pay to develop.

Saturday morning's walk was to look at a trail near the Weatherly Hillclimb Road, which crosses the Weatherly-White Haven Highway to and up Penn Haven Mountain along the path of what was a gravity railroad.

The group is considering several possible trails:

- From Upper Lehigh to the Powerhouse Restaurant in White Haven;
- From northwest of Eckley and along the north side of Buck

Mountain to the Lehigh River;

- From the easternmost side of Hazleton City, past Dreck's Creek, and along the south side of Buck Mountain to the Lehigh River;

- From Beaver Meadows to the end of Penn Haven Mountain, and

- From the Lehigh River, along the Black Creek to Ginthers Corners. This is the southernmost trail being considered.

McGill said two of the trails could be connected and made into one. There is a former railbed between the Beaver Meadows and East Hazleton sites.

The group has been spending its Saturdays looking at the potential trails, in anticipation of a visit from Tom Sexton of the Rails to Trails Conservancy of Pennsylvania. McGill said Sexton will also view the trails and then render his opinion on which of the trails, or more than one, would be feasible to develop.

A Special Projects grant from the Pennsylvania Historical and Museum Commission is being sought to help plan the trail.

While McGill said none of the

See **HIKING, C3**



FRANK ANDRUSCAVAGE/Standard-Speake
Walkers look over a map before checking an abandoned railroad bed near Weatherly Saturday

7/11/99

Hiking

(Continued from C1)

trails has been ruled out by the group after their walks, some are better than others, because some go across private property, and the permission of those property owners would have to be obtained before that particular trail could be developed and used.

"If there are two (Sexton identifies), it will be up to us to decide which one," McGill said. "Mr. Sexton will also help us with title searches (for the land where the trails

would exist)."

Bob Sagan, an avid outdoorsman who has helped the other members of the group better understand the land where the trails would be, said he favors a trail that links Hazleton directly.

"There's a bigger interest in the Hazleton area," Sagan said. "We would have a lot more response, if it were in Hazleton."

The members of the group come from a wide variety of backgrounds.

Sue Nasrani likes to hike, and thinks a trail "would be good for the community."

John Goulstone is another avid outdoorsman who has been volunteering with the Partnership since he retired.

Nick Fisher is a 16-year-old high school student "who likes nature."

McGill said the Saturday morning sojourns have attracted as few as two, and as many as 18 people per week.