

FRIENDS OF THE MUSKETAWA TRAIL NEWSLETTER
Our 13th Year of Service and Counting

FALL / WINTER 2007

Vol. 12 No. 31

Dear Trail Friends:

It's been sometime since our last issue, Spring/Summer 2007, so much to report, not only regarding the Musketawa Trail but also the expansion of rail trails in West Michigan—a brief summary.

TRAIL MANAGER NEWS: Summer and fall of trail use has been heavy as usual, especially so on weekends and holidays. The trail-head parking lot at Marne is often filled with users parking along the roadside. The DNR is looking into expanding that parking area to accommodate users and for safety reasons. Weekday mornings and evening users are often seen as well, with seniors, teenagers, families, and vacationers taking advantage of the more quiet weekday times. Some night riders are reported. We continue to hear of many wildlife sightings along the trail including the usual deer, wild turkeys, Canadian geese and ducks, with an occasional fox and hawk spotted as well as Grosse and pheasants. The fall colors were spectacular as usual. Requests for trail brochure continue to arrive from far and wide, including neighboring states and those as far away as California.

Winter trail information is sparse since our trail manager **Wes Lomax** has been absent through late fall and winter, possibly due to a delay in renewal of his contract with the DNR. He is taking a much needed leave of absence. At this point, it appears that a colleague of his, **Ken Epplert**, will be filling in for him on an interim basis through the summer and fall, with Wes rejoining us later in the year.

TRAIL PROJECTS/ACTIVITIES: A few trail projects have been completed by our volunteers this past summer including the installation of two signage kiosks at the Broadway trail head in east Muskegon and the trail head at Ravenna. The signs installed are 3 foot x 5 foot in size and in full color with the Musketawa Trail logo. They were professionally made by the Muskegon County Road Commission and are quite attractive and durable, with a plastic covering to enhance durability. At both sites, flower boxes were installed and flowering shrubs were planted along side. Signage costs were paid for by memorial funds honoring John Austin from Muskegon and Stanley Shavalier from Ravenna.

THE RAVENNA WATER TOWER PROJECT has been put on hold with some finishing touches hopefully to be completed this spring and summer. We also have some railroad memorabilia to install at the Ravenna trail head as well, hopefully this spring.

THE THIRD CHILDREN'S BIKE SAFETY RODEO was conducted at Ravenna and was reported in our last newsletter but we are including photos of that event on the back page.

TRAIL SIGNAGE Our request to have the State put up trail signs at the I-96 exit for Marne and the US 31 exit for Broadway Ave were turned down. However, we plan to resubmit hopefully with a stronger argument in support.

MEMORIAL EVENT: On October 20 we had a memorial event, again at the Ravenna trail head, honoring four recently deceased trail members and supporters. They include **Jim Schmitt**, our long time board treasurer and active trail builder, who was honored by family and friends who planted a six-foot blue spruce tree and memorial plaque. **Stanley Shavalier** was honored with the installation of a trail sign and kiosk cited above with a trail bench yet to be installed. **John Austin's** memorial was a signage and kiosk at the east Broadway trail head in East Muskegon. **Ruth Lomax**, wife of trail manager Wes Lomax, was honored with the planting of a crimson maple tree in her memory. It was a lovely, crisp fall day with a good turn out of family and friends, with a luncheon served afterward at a local church. Thanks to all who contributed and participated and to Tim Linck for the contribution of three beautiful blue spruce. If space permits, a few photos will be included.

TRAIL PLANNING--2008: At our recent trail board meeting, we discussed some possible new trail projects and goals for the upcoming year. As these project come in greater focus, we will be in touch with more information in our next newsletter.

WEB SITE IN NEED OF HELP: The Musketawa Trail web-master is looking to upgrade our six-year old computer system. If anyone knows of a good source of donated or discounted new or almost new Apple Mac hardware/software, please contact us. We are a 501 (c) (3) non-profit organization

with contributions being tax deductible. Mark has done a fine job of developing and managing our site, so tune in, look it over and watch for future improvements. Contact Mark at MarkF@cablespeed.com

17th ANNUAL MICHIGANDER BIKE TOUR - A CROSS STATE BIKING ADVENTURE: The Michigan Trails and Greenway Alliance invites you to ride along on the 17th annual Michigan bicycle tour which involves two options: **1) WEEKEND tour—July 12 & 13, 2008**, which includes our own beautiful Musketawa Trail from Grand Rapids to Muskegon and back **2) WEEK LONG tour—July 13 – 18, 2008**, Muskegon to Traverse City, starting in the Muskegon area with overnight stops in Rockford, Edmore, Big Rapids, Cadillac and Traverse City. These tours benefit the Michigan Trails and Greenway Alliance, formerly Rails-to-Trails, Michigan Chapter. Join us on this family—companion, friendly ride. To register, or to assist as a volunteer, you can contact the MTGA office at 1-517-485-6022 or through their website at www.michigantrails.org Tour fliers are also available at many area bicycle shops. This is one of the premier Michigan bicycle events.

TRAIL USER NEWS: Long time member, **Jim Horjus**, suggests greater weed control on plants that break through the pavement. He inline skates with his wife Martha, while their two children ride bicycles on the trail, most often on Saturdays. They also ask about a possible drinking fountain or hand pump in Conklin or Ravenna. In reply, the weed growth is a continued problem with trail managers addressing it annually. The snake grass and others are tough customers. The drinking fountain issue has no immediate solution unless we could talk the village of Ravenna into installing a water fountain outside of their village office which is adjacent to the trail head.

Ron Schulz, of Norton Shores, continued his trail membership despite having a stroke, is now disabled and unable to ride the trail. However, he continues to support our efforts and we wish him well. As I recall, he has triplet granddaughters who now, I suspect, are grown up.

Tom and Tricia Rogers have supported us from day one and write to thank us for all our hard work, planning, building, and improving the trail. This summer, they enjoyed a new-found appreciation of the trail in their young daughters Camryn and Payne. They are now riding bikes—no more training wheels, another major personal achievement in developing their sense of competency. Congratulations!!! How about a family photo, send us a couple and perhaps we could include them in our next newsletter. Send to Ed Holovka at 90 S. Buys Road, Muskegon, Mi .49445 or email to Ed at d.holovka@verizon.net

Carol Kowinski, from Grand Rapids, another long term supporter, sent a note thanking us for the trail work, enjoys the great exercise it provides, and also rides the White Pine trail on occasion.

Duane and Kerri Snowdin, from Coopersville, also renewed with an added donation. They publish a newspaper, the **Coopersville Observer**, have been great trail supporters, and feature articles about the trail, with the most recent one being

the rebuilding of the Ravenna railroad water tower with photos. Thanks to all for your support.

John Garzelloni emailed us in bold letters “to keep snowmobilers off the trail, they are causing serious damage to it, it will soon look like the Hart-Montague Trail”. In reply John, this has been a continued issue which we have tried to resolve. A small group of snowmobilers have been active with us in trail projects and have made financial contributions. They are aware of the problem but are unable to control the snowmobile activities of rogue snowmobilers who use the trail with damaging results. We continue to look closely at this issue, with the possibility of funds available to repave the damaged areas and with a tougher asphalt mixture. A longer reply has been presented in previous newsletters.

MEMBERSHIP RENEWAL: Spring is our annual renewal time and we appreciate your continuing support as well as your generous donations. All of the funds, as you may know, go directly into trail projects and enhancements. We have upcoming costs including finishing touches to the Ravenna water tower project, updating and replacing the adopt-a-trail recognition signs. Newsletter costs are ongoing, plus we are contemplating some new projects in the future. As you may know, we enhance our funds by receiving grants from a variety of organizations including the Community Foundation for Muskegon County and DALMAC, as well as others

PHOTOGRAPHER ALERT! The Michigan Trails and Greenways Alliance located in Lansing has published a calendar with photos of Michigan rail-trails. We hope to submit some Musketawa Trail photos for inclusion in the next year’s calendar. We have many of our own which reflect trail projects and users, but they are amateur efforts. I know we have some talented photographer members out there, so send them our way and we’ll choose a few for the calendar inclusion as well as add into our album for possible future use. We are also always looking for more photos to post on our web site. Perhaps we can make a contest of it, although I haven’t discussed this with our board. To obtain the 2008 calendar, call 517-485-6022 or key in on their website www.michigantrails.org

H. & L. Glasshouer, from Hudsonville and long time trail supporters, wrote that they love the Musketawa Trail but live too far to be volunteers. Hey guys, we all live some distance from the trail, ranging from Muskegon to Lowell, Grand Rapids to Holton, but we appreciate your membership and support.

NATIONAL PARK SERVICE RECREATIONAL TRAIL REGISTRY: Mark and I submitted our application for inclusion of the Musketawa Trail into the National Recreational Trail Registry. A recent call verified receipt of our application, with notice of inclusion into the registry to be announced during the National Trails Day celebration June 8, 2008. When so designated, we will be listed on the national website www.americantrails.org/nationalrecreationaltrails

As you see from our letterhead, this adds to our listing as a Millennium Trail that was done in the year 2000, by first lady, Hillary Clinton, with eligibility to use the logo.

WEST MICHIGAN TRAIL NEWS—lots is happening!

WHITE PINE TRAIL sees the completion of 8.2 miles of additional pavement this past fall, now extending the paved portion of the trail 22 miles from Grand Rapids to Sand Lake at the Kent and Montcalm County line. Their Friends volunteers also erected a new gazebo just north of the West River Bridge, a nice looking structure. Friends of the Fred Meijer White Pine Trail website is: www.whitepinetrail.com

MUSKETAWA-EASTWARD EXTENSION through Walker along Four Mile Rd to link the White Pine Trail and to the Fred Meijer Standale Trail which would provide access to the Millennium Park and Kent trails

THE FRED MEIJER - BERRY JUNCTION TRAIL from Whitehall to North Muskegon, in Muskegon County, received a much needed new lease on life. A \$400,000 grant from the West Michigan Trails and Greenways Coalition brings with it matching funds from the Fred Meijer Foundation and with added donations could begin work on the first part of the trail, covering about 5.5 miles of the 10 mile trail.

PAUL HENRY THORNAPPLE TRAIL: Kent County Parks and Recreation announces tentative plans to pave a 4.5 mile section of this trail between Dutton and Calendonia in 2008. The group is also working to extend the trail in the Middleville area. The Thornapple Trail Association website is: www.thornappletrail.com

MUSKETAWA TRAIL EXTENSION WEST through the City of Muskegon and joining the Lakeshore Trail to Pere Marquette Park and Lake Michigan beaches. They apparently have funds to extend the Musketawa Trail east to US 31 and north to Laketon Avenue, and westward.

MUSKETAWA TRAIL—FRUITPORT spur is being explored by the Village of Fruitport and would connect to bicycles trails in Spring Lake.

NORTHBANK TRAIL-Grand River: A new friends group has been formed in attempt to develop an 18 mile rail-trail on a corridor goes from Spring Lake in Ottawa County to Nunica and Coopersville. They are working to acquire ownership or easements of apparent private holdings along this segment. For further information, please call **Jack Ketchum** at 1-616-842-8850 or e-mail: jketchum@sbcglobal.net

THE WEST MICHIGAN TRAILS AND GREENWAYS COALITION is working to acquire 22 miles of a soon to be railbanked railroad corridor between Lowell and Greenville, and another 16 miles between Lowell and Ionia. These acquisitions will connect the 41-mile Clinton-Ionia-Shiawassee Trail to the 41-mile Fred Meijer Heartland Trail. Furthermore, this would create a 120-mile horseshoe shaped trail loop from Alma to Owosso, with long term linkages to other trails cited above. Wow, how about these goings-on and I'm not sure this really covers it all.

SAFE ROUTES TO SCHOOL PROGRAM was passed in 2005, with Michigan allocated \$19 million dollars for projects and activities to improve children's routes to school. This funding could include sidewalks and trails for walking and biking, creating safe crossing intersections, law enforcement, and "traffic calming" for hazardous areas and programs to get children and families more outdoor-active. Trails located on routes that lead specifically to schools can be important safe route projects as well as trail spurs joining accessible neighborhoods. Michigan elementary and middle schools are eligible for grant funding after completing five prerequisite steps established by the Michigan Safe Routes to School handbook published by the governor's council on physical fitness and MDOT. Once these steps are completed, the funding application is easy, with no school match required. Handbook and program information by downloading from www.saferoutesmichigan.org Years ago, many if not most children walked or rode bicycles to school, exploring and gaining self-assurance in growing up. Today only about 10 percent of children do so. Hey, school folks, why not explore these possibilities with us.

**MONTHLY MEETING
SCHEDULE FOR NEXT FOUR MONTHS
7:00 P.M. ON THURSDAYS**

**April 3, 2008 May 1, 2008
June 5, 2008 July 6, 2008**

**Ravenna Village Hall
12090 Crockery Creek Drive
You're all welcome to come join us.
We appreciate your input and insight.**

**MUSKETAWA TRAIL WEBSITE
www.musketawatrail.org**

FRIENDS OF THE MUSKETAWA TRAIL OFFICERS

- Edward Holovka, President. (231) 744-8133
- Robert O'Brien, Vice President. (616) 453-0897
- Don Scherencel, Secretary. (616) 837-8973
- Oscar Reed, Director. (231) 744-5731
- Paul Balek, Director. (231) 788-6983
- Harold Drake, Director. (231) 853-2338
- Mark Fritsma, Director (616) 897-2198
- Robert Whelan n/a at this time
- Wes Lomax, West-end Trail Manager n/a temporary
- Sharon Davis, Director (616) 837-9310
- Ken Epplett, Interim Trail Manager (616) 402-4511
- Ann Engdal, Ottawa Cty Trail Manager . . . (616) 638-6542

3RD SAFE KIDS BIKE RODEO: RAVENNA TRAILHEAD, JUNE 2007



BIKER REGISTRATION



BIKE SAFETY CHECK/Tom Anderson & Wes



SIZING FOR FREE HELMETS
Pres. Ed Holovka & Sec. Don S.



YOUNGEST BIKER w/ new helmet



"OBSTACLE COURSE, W/TRAIL
MANAGER LEADING THE WAY



NOTE REBUILT R.R. TOWER BEHIND