

# Musketawa Trail

NEWSLETTER



National Recreational Trail 2008

Millennium Trail 2000

Fall / Winter 2016/2017

Vol. 21, No. 44

21 Years of trail work and counting

Dear Trail Friends:

The relatively mild winter and with less than average snow, likely was disappointing for snowmobilers but gave hardy bicyclists unusual opportunity the open trails.

As the Friends group enters its 21st. year, new leadership is in place looking at trail enhancement and maintenance projects for the year. New board president, Tim Nink, has served on the board for nearly five years, has worked on many trail projects during that time, and is an avid biker. Married and has three children, Tim is an electrical engineer, bringing new energy and fine communication-leadership skills to our board.



choose a suitable site. Their County Parks will lay down the concrete base while the Friends will do the installation, reflecting the fine cooperation between our two groups.

In addition, the final touches to interior painting of the caboose at Ravenna will be made as well as laying down a rubber mat runner for floor protection. We understand the Ravenna Village Team that brought the caboose has further plans to prepare it for eventual periodic public viewing. Another past memorial bench request is being followed-up for possible trail installation.

**GOLD SPIKE TOUR IV 2018** has been approved by our board for the 32-mile combined Musketawa and Fred Meijer Pioneer Trail ride. It again will start at the Meijer Corp. Headquarter parking lot in Walker and continue to E. Broadway in Muskegon. It is scheduled for Saturday, May 26, 2018, Memorial Day weekend. Our committee members, Tim Nink, Gary DeKock, Donna Christensen, and new board member, James Smith are looking for financial sponsors, with Meijer Corp already on board. A large undertaking, with much planning and preparation requiring a sizeable team to repeat our previous well appreciated rides. More details and registration forms will be included in our next newsletter and available at other sources.

**FUTURE PROJECTS** are in the talking stages including installing covered cabanas at our major trailheads. Varied sizes are being looked at, from a one table style as seen at the channel at the N. Muskegon State Park, to a two-table or more seen at other parks in our county. Cost and construction issues are key determiners, with further, outside funding very likely needed.



Gary DeKock, who has been on the board from day one, has agreed to serve as vice president. He has worked on many projects over the years with him and his wife helping out on the Gold Spike Tour fundraisers. Further introductions to our volunteer board members are later included.

## PROPOSED PROJECTS: 2017

Noting the aging condition of the wood decking and railings on some of our observation decks constructed years ago, we plan to “recondition” them and enhance appearance with quality oil based stain. An early attempt at painting with latex paint did not turn out well.

The third of three metal arts bike racks will be ready for installation at the Marne trailhead. Ottawa County Trails director, Anne Engvall, and Friends of the Musketawa Trail president, Tim Nink, met at the Marne trailhead to



**MEMBER NOTES:** Bill Bylsma notes with his membership renewal and added donation that “he loves the trail, keep up the good work.” Our thanks and appreciate the feedback. Nancy Czyzewski, a generous donor, states, “thanks for all you’ve done to champion the love of outdoors and improvements to our trail.” She further “marveled” at my parting note information in the last newsletter. These are only a few “field comments” but we appreciate hearing from you, the assessment of our work as well as providing trail suggestions. Here, I might add, thanks to the board and my wife Diana for the impressive plaque given to me at our recent annual dinner meeting recognizing my 21 years as Friends president—a real surprise.



**A GET WELL** to Sharon Davis, our long time board member from Coopersville who is recovering from surgery and follow-up care. We hope for your full recovery and continuing with your biking trips and other retirement plans.

**NEW DNR REQUIREMENTS:** With our Michigan trails now coming under DNR State parks supervision, Friends groups such as ours now must comply with new rules associated with our trail work and projects. Basically, projects must be approved by our supervisor, Greg Sherburn, manager of the Muskegon State Park. Our trail workers/volunteers are required to wear high-visible vests, personal vehicles must have magnetic identification signage, and we are to track all volunteer hours, as specified in the “Memorandum of Understanding” that we all signed.

**DID YOU KNOW....** that the Friends group sponsored a “name the trail” contest in 1997? The winner was Robert Deems of Ravenna who won a Mountain Bike donated by Break-away Bicycles in Muskegon. The name “Musketawa” that you surmised is a combination of the two counties traversed by the trail—Ottawa and Muskegon.

**TRAILS IN MICHIGAN:** We will continue to grow as more funds become available from this year’s grant awards from the Michigan Natural Resources Trust Fund Commission. Grant awards totaling \$16.3 million dollars are distributed to various trail projects in Michigan. Briefly, these trust funds are generated from taxes that developers pay to extract raw materials from our state lands. This commission is an independent body that meets bi-annually to award projects funds for parks, recreation, trails, fisheries, water trails, etc.

**MICHIGAN TRAILS:** Michigan is blessed with a vast array of trails, the most of any state, which you will find in the “Michigan Trails Magazine.” It is published annually by Rockford Advertising in cooperation with the West Michigan Trails and Greenway Coalition and the Michigan Trails and Greenway Alliance as a public service. It’s comprehensive listing of trails in Michigan, with great photos, maps, and important is indeed impressive. It is a must for trail users. It is available at bike shops, tourist offices, and by contacting [www.trailsmichigan.com](http://www.trailsmichigan.com)

**FRED MEIJER BERRY JUNCTION TRAIL:** Is a 6.5 mile connector between the Hart-Montague and Muskegon Lakeshore Trail which now has portions paved, with completion before the end of the year. This will allow riders to go from Hart in Oceana County through Muskegon along the Muskegon Lakeshore trail to Pere Marquette Park and the great beaches of Lake Michigan. A connection to the Musketawa Trail east to Walker in Grand Rapids is also available. I’m sure the rather newly formed Friends of the Fred Meijer Berry Junction Trail, led by Tom Lindrup, will be busy soon with possible enhancement projects.

**SAFETY:** Have you heard our lawmakers are considering a bill to make a 5-foot distance span standard for vehicles passing bicyclists on roadways? With all of the tragic and lethal accidents we’ve seen in the past few years, seems a worthy added safety step.

**IN PASSING, BE CAREFUL ON THE TRAILS:** Although trails such as ours have a good safety record, we have had two fatalities since the opening. Also, some brushing and brush burns from spilling on the wet trails has been reported. Be alert and following common safety leads to safer, happier rides.

## FRIENDS OF THE MUSKETAWA TRAIL 2017 SCHEDULED BOARD MEETINGS

April 6, 2017 Thursday, 7:00 p.m.  
June 1, 2017 Thursday, 7:00 p.m.  
August 5, 2017 Thursday, 7:00 p.m.  
October 5, 2017 Thursday, 7:00 p.m.

### Meetings are held at Ravenna Village Hall 12090 Crockery Creek Drive

Come join us, we appreciate your input and insight

Friends of the Musketawa Trail is a non-profit 501 (c)(3) organization with donations tax deductible. Thank you for your contributions and enjoy the trail. Your donations can be made via PayPal on the trail web site or mail them in the enclosed envelope to:

**Friends of the Musketawa Trail  
PO Box 5082  
Muskegon MI 49445**

Your donations provide us with the means to continue our trail enhancements, promotions, and maintenance work so you can enjoy a safe ride.

## FRIENDS OF THE MUSKETAWA TRAIL BOARD MEMBERS

Tim Nink, President	(231) 747-6116
Gary DeKock, Vice President	(616) 791-9490
Sharon Davis, Secretary	(616) 837-9310
Diana Holovka, Treasurer	(231) 744-8133
Oscar Reed, Director	(231) 744-5731
Mark Fritsma, Director	(616) 897-2198
George Czinder, Director	(616) 847-0947
Joann Schmitt, Director	(231) 733-2196
Donna Christensen, Director	(616) 531-9683
James Smith, Director	(231) 266-3263
Edward Holovka, Ex-Officio	(231) 744-8133



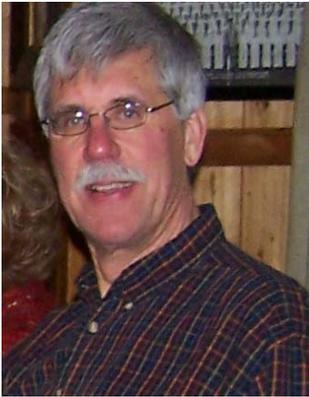
Please visit us on our [FaceBook](#) page and website: [www.musketawatrail.org](http://www.musketawatrail.org)



**Tim Nink**, our new president is now in his fifth year on the board. He is an avid biker who rides the Musketawa Trail often, occasionally with his wife Sheri. He has an electrical engineering degree from Grand Valley University and is employed as the service department manager and systems engineer at Johnston Boiler Company in Ferrysburg. Exploring the Friends trail web site, sparked his interest in this volunteer group and attended a few meetings. This inspired him to join the group and he began participating in trail projects which within a few years reflected his eagerness to volunteer and eventually the decision to elect him as the Friends vice president. Tim has been the prime organizer of the recent, successful Gold Spike Tour Rides. With the retirement of long time Friends president, Ed Holovka, Tim was unanimously elected in 2017 as the new board president. Tim and his wife Sheri also volunteer on the Michigander Bike Tour each summer. Tim is also involved with the Friends of the Fred Meijer Berry Junction Trail. You will no doubt see Tim and perhaps Sheri on the trails often.



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**Gary DeKock**, our new vice president, reports his interest in cycling began early and joined the newly organized Rails-to-Trails Conservancy in 1986. With years of work on trails, he organized and was the lead rider for the dedication ride held in 1992 for the just paved, 15-mile Kent Trail. He attended the first meeting of the Musketawa Trail Friends group in 1996 and a year later that of the White Pine Trail Friends group. Gary has been a long time active volunteer on the Musketawa Trail construction and enhancement projects over the past 20 years. He appreciates the gifted construction crews headed by Joel Mikkelsen that turned piles of lumber into bridge decking over trestles or observation decks on weekend projects. When the big wind storms knocked down countless trees blocking trails, our volunteers cut and cleared the trees for days, and often on Earth Day, they planted trees and shrubs to “green” the trails. Retiring in 2013 as a wastewater plant supervisor with the City of Grand Rapids, he now has more time to work on and promote the trail including events such as the Gold Spike Trail Tours. As a dedicated board member and volunteer, he and wife Linda have been invaluable participants who continue to serve recognizing the value of “our trail” in bringing people together, providing healthy outdoor activities, and adding, in small ways, to local economies.



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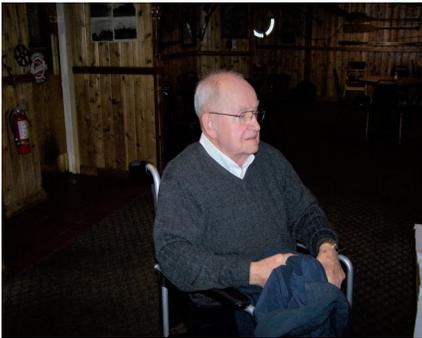


**Sharon Davis**, from Coopersville, has been a board member from day one, attending the first meeting in Ravenna when the thought of a Friends group was initiated. She currently serves as secretary. Owning and riding a pedal bike as long as she can remember and graduating to long distance weekend rides, the introduction to the first paved trail in west Michigan, the Hart-Montague Trail piqued her interest in rail-trails. As a nurse at Mercy Hospital, she saw bikers and pedestrians being injured by heavy traffic, trucks, distracted drivers, and large farm equipment. Seeing trails as quiet, safe, and scenic places to walk or ride with friends or alone, Sharon especially appreciates the value of rail-trails. She also loves to see families, children, and seniors on the trail. Sharon is really a “trail blazer” and now during retirement, with family and friends having traveled and biked trails in 24 states, Canada, and the Netherlands. A frequent rider on the Musketawa Trail, you



may also see her cross country skiing when snow conditions are right. Sharon’s contributions to the trail are many, assisting with trail projects, fund-raising, events, etc., and especially appreciating meeting some wonderful people along the way.

**Please note, this is a beginning of introductions of the Musketawa Trail Board Members, more intros will take place in future newsletters.**



**IN MEMORY:** After an extended illness, sadly, on May 15, 2017, Harold Drake Jr., a valuable and long time Friends member and treasurer, passed away at the age of 86. Harold was a trail visionary who saw the value of rail-trails, serving on an early planning committee to convert the abandoned railroad bed into a bicycle trail. He and a fellow early "Trail Blazer", Joel Mikkelsen from New Era called the first meeting in Ravenna to organize a Friends group. Then, with Ed Holovka, chosen to lead a committee to establish a formal group, Harold assisted in establishing the organization and served as board treasurer following the death of James Schmitt and retired from that position about 2007. He was a valuable intermediary and trail advocate with the Village of Ravenna

Office while serving as the Village president. I personally appreciated his wisdom, council, and support in my role as the Friends president over the years, as well as that of Village staff. Harold and I had something else personal we shared, both serving in

the military about the same time during the Korean War, he in the Air Force and me in the Army. Harold retired from Rogers Printing in Ravenna, he also served a valuable role in getting our well regarded trail brochure and early newsletters in print and out to the public. He will be sadly missed!



**HAROLD A DRAKE**

June 30, 1930  
to  
May 15, 2017



Friends of the Musketawa Trail  
PO Box 5082  
Muskegon MI 49445