FRIENDS OF THE

Musketawa Trail

NEWSLETTER

National Recreational Trail 2008

Millennium Trail 2000

Fall & Winter Newsletter 2017
Vol. 22 No. 47
22 Years of trail work and counting

Dear Trail Friends:

With the cold and snows of winter behind us, time to put up your cross country skis and pack away those snowmobiles and tune-up your bicycles and roller blades and get out those running shoes. Our trail work dormancy is coming to an end and we volunteers are awakening to a new season of trail enhancements and maintenance projects. We have been doing prep work for the May 26 Memorial Day weekend Gold Spike Trail Tour IV 2018 by gathering trail sponsors and registering riders. So get yourself, family, and friends registered by following instructions on the back page of our newsletter and our website by registering online at **www.musketawatrail.com.**

TRAIL PROJECTS: 2018 First on our list is the Gold Spike Trail Tour IV. With the last of the three trail metal arts projects in place, our next steps are to tackle some staining projects on the three remaining trail wildlife observation decks we had constructed so as to extend the wood life and add to their appearance. We also are looking at roofing them as well to aid in serving as all-weather shelters.

As previously, reported, we have had requests to add two memorial benches to the trail, one in commemoration of long-time friend and board member Harold Drake. An Eagle Scout candidate, the fifth over the years, is considering the trail for his project which we will review.

Added to the list is a possible planting of wildflowers along selected sections of the trail. This past November, I attended such a planting on the nearby Hart-Montague Trail conducted by Joel Mikkelsen with planter equipment from Oceana County Conservation Department staff. Most impressive! We eagerly will be watching spring results and progress through the summer. Ideal planting time is in early November.

Other major projects in our sights for the near future are the installation of metal kiosks of various sizes with tables at three major trailheads like those installed at our State parks. So we volunteers will be spending more than a few evenings and weekends working to fulfill these goals. We will be conferring with the DNR staff to obtain project approval for each. We would appreciate any feedback you may have regarding our goals and possible suggestions.

A BIG THANK YOU to the 96 trail memberships with added donations received over this past year, 2017. The amounts of $4270 will add greatly to our treasury giving us the funds to purchase materials and products to achieve our goals for the trail. You all, over the years, have been most generous partners in making the Musketawa Trail a very special place to enjoy the out-of-doors in West Michigan. We have been very good stewards of these funds, hopefully deserving of your trust.

Congratulations to former long-term president of the Friends of the Musketawa Trail, Edward Holovka, for receiving the annual Fred Meijer Trails Champion Award for 2017. It was awarded by Director of the West Michigan Trails & Greenway Coalition, John Morrison, at their annual October trails gathering held at Meijer Gardens in Grand Rapids. Ed was cited as a tireless leader and active volunteer for over two decades. Long term board members described Ed as a "stellar leader and model volunteer" as well as "an organized and talented leader who recognized peoples gifts and skills and with a 'get it done' attitude". Ed was quick to credit his board and other volunteers, a team of talented and dedicated individuals willing to give up evenings and weekends to complete many projects. Their work has gone from railroad bed prep and trail building, to enhancement projects, railroad historical signage, to maintenance and Earth Day tree plantings, to metal arts projects, etc., etc. Ed also credits the 100 plus trail members and donors for their generous financial contributions that have provided the financial means for our work projects as well as thanking them for their positive trail feedback. Ed also acknowledges the board efforts in getting the Musketawa Trail named as a Millennium Trail in 2000 by then first Lady Hillary Clinton and in 2008 listing as a National Recreational Trail. And the work goes on…….

A PLEA! While visiting the Marne Trailhead this past fall, we noted the absence of the crossbucks, a significant part of a historical railroad sign we installed there. This sign and installation cost us a good deal of money as well as time and work to refurbish, transport, and install. So please return it quietly to the site and all will be forgiven.

TRAIL MEMBERS' COMMENTS: Kathleen Carr, with property adjacent to the trail at Hts. Ravenna Road, commented that she and her family love to

horseback ride on the trail. She is concerned with electric bicycles being allowed on the trail and would hope that courtesy signs would be added as increased safety for non-wheeled (equestrian) users.

In reply, we have had, for years, a list of trail safety rules to be placed on the trail and need to clear it with the DNR for trail posting. Might I add that we hope you and other equestrian trail users are responsibly cleaning up the horse droppings that have resulted in some nasty encounters by bicyclists in the past, with the trail manager left to do the clean-up work.

New trail members, Bill and Marcia of Caledonia write that they had ridden the trail over a dozen times this past summer and admired how it was so well kept. We also received a request from a Cleveland, Ohio, resident for trail information, who is interested in riding our trail and other trails in the area. A trail brochure and most recent newsletter was sent. Included with his membership, Michael of Grand Rapids writes to thank us for our work on this wonderful trail.

SAD TO REPORT: Years of safe winter snowmobiling on the trail came to an end in the early morning hours of December 28, 2017. The Muskegon Chronicle newspaper reports a North Muskegon man, age 40, died during the early morning hours, crashing into bridge support at the Black Creek Trestle just east of the Muskegon Broadway trailhead. Previous snowmobiling events over the past years have involved knocking down trail sign posts and even smashing the destination kiosk in Marne but with no reported injuries. Speed was reportedly a contributing factor. This trestle, deck, and railing happened to be an early Friends project, accomplished before paving had occurred. It is a sad reminder that safe use of the trail and elsewhere is paramount at all times.

GRAND RAPIDS BICYCLING NEWS: A belated congrats to the City of Grand Rapids for their 2009 designation as a bike-friendly community—Bronze Level. Our Friends vice president and long time bicycling advocate, **Gary DeKock** reports the award recognizes work there to promote bicycle safety and education, while encouraging bicycling in the community. That year, cycling supporters joined to create a Greater Grand Rapids Bicycle Coalition, working to increase healthy and safe bicycle opportunities. Their advocacy and education paid off that year with a 10-year **Grand Rapids Forward Plan** adopted by the City to "create the most bicycle-friendly downtown in the Midwest." The next project is bicycle sharing that will place more than 800 bikes at 100 stations downtown and surrounding neighborhoods over the next five years. Gary also reports an important conference, **Rolling Forward: Michigan Bicycling:** in Grand Rapids—June 1-2. Various city, state, and university representatives are involved in partnership with the city. So put it on your calendar—a chance for cycling advocates to welcome users and share trail stories. Gary and wife Linda, go from bicycling to kayaking/canoeing. They enjoy transferring from trails to water in their retirement. Gary and Linda paddled their tandem kayak on their 10-week journey down the Mississippi River in June 2014.

Photo by:
Howard Meyerson

Respectfully written by Ed Holovka, past president and Ex-officio of the Friends of the Musketawa Trail.

FRIENDS OF THE MUSKETAWA TRAIL
2018 SCHEDULED BOARD MEETINGS

June	7, 2018	Thursday, 7:00 p.m.
August	2, 2018	Thursday, 7:00 p.m.
October	4, 2018	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 are much needed and 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

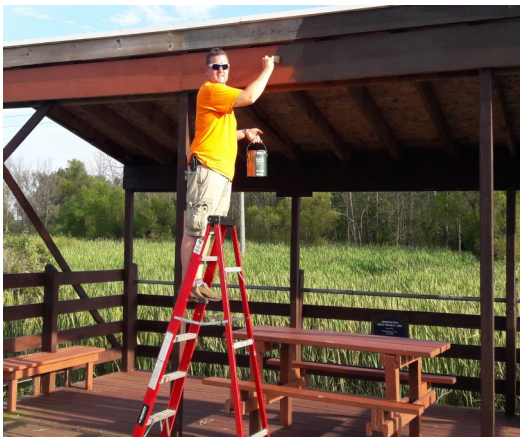
Tim Nink, President	(231) 747-6116
Gary DeKock, Vice President	(616) 791-9490
Sharon Davis, Secretary	(616) 837-9310
Diana Holovka, Treasurer	(231) 744-8133
Oscar Reed, Director	(231) 744-5731
Mark Fritsma, Director	(616) 897-2198
George Czinder, Director	(616) 847-0947
Joann Schmitt, Director	(231) 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 Face Book page and website: www.musketawatrail.com

Here is the final presentation of our board members

Mark Fritsma of Lowell, has been on our board from the beginning and his trail advocacy goes even earlier. He has attended many preliminary public hearings before the Musketawa Trail was developed and even given a name. Mark participated in some early trail building projects but had been most valuable in setting up and managing our Friends website for years and sharing developments and issues with regards to other developing trails. He was also a contracted employee earlier with the DNR to help evaluate the then railroad corridor before the trail was developed. His long time board membership with the Thornapple Trail Association and vice-chair of the Friends of the River Valley Rail-trails plus staff member and rider on the Michigander Bike tour since its inception in 1992, has provided us with valuable insight over the years. As a graduate of Western Michigan University, he drew up one of the first state-wide trail maps as a student project. A letter carrier of 24 years with the United States Postal Service, he is married with two active growing boys.

Donna Christensen is a Grand Rapids native who is passionate about West Michigan trails, bike paths, and bicycle commuting. She joined Friends of the Musketawa Trail to become better acquainted with the trail system at large and wonderful people who worked hard to create, improve and care for the 25-mile Musketawa Trail system and facilities that so many people use and enjoy all year long. Donna has had a varied career as a graphic artist and illustrator, and she sometimes has the opportunity to use those skills to help create graphics for T-shirts and other printed materials for Friends of the Musketawa Trail. Donna has been a board volunteer with our Gold Spike Tour Rides and a big help in the cleaning of the caboose at the Ravenna Trailhead. As a person who enjoys utilizing a bike to commute to work, it is her dream to see West Michigan expand its trail and bike path system to allow more people to safely and enjoyably integrate bicycle use into their daily routines and travel activities. Donna says, "I would love to see a trail system that leads to small towns and cities all over the state of Michigan, and one day, with the hard work of people like those in the Friends of the Musketawa Trail group, I am sure it will happen!"



James Smith is our newest board member and is a born and raised native to Muskegon. He enjoys working with his hands and figuring out ways to solve any issues encountered. With those being his passion, he decided to go into a career as an engineer and has done so for the past six years. James also enjoys outside activities and in his free time, likes to go hiking in the woods to experience peace and relaxation. He joined the Friends of the Musketawa Trail group after volunteering on projects for a couple of years. His decision to join the Friends group was because of his passion for the out-of-doors and working with his hands. He enjoys helping with the construction of new observation lookouts, repainting projects, and the installation of new enhancement projects on the trail. "I am pleased to be part of a great team and a great trail!"

GOLD SPIKE TRAIL TOUR IV

Saturday, May 26th, 2018
Hosted by the Friends of the Musketawa Trail
Come ride with us Rain or Shine

Ride the Fred Meijer Pioneer Trail
and the Musketawa Trail

Time: Check in opens at 8:00 a.m. until 10:00 a.m.

Location: Meijer HQ parking lot at 2929 Walker Ave NW, Grand Rapids, Mi. 49544
Take Exit 28 from I96 then south on Walker Ave

Options: You may choose your distance: 20k, 41k, 60k, or 100k and you may turn around at anytime

Benefits: Funds raised will benefit the Friends of the Musketawa Trail (501 [c] [3] non-profit organization)

You will be guaranteed a t-shirt with ride logo for all early paid registrants—by April 15, 2018. SAG stations at trailheads, Marne (10k), Conklin (20.5k), Ravenna (30k), and Muskegon (50k) will have refreshments and light snacks.

Please visit us online at www.musketawatrail.com for more information and to register. You may pay via PayPal or mail a check to Friends of the Musketawa Trail, PO Box 5082, N. Muskegon, MI 49445.

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