

The Trailblazer

2018 Overview

One of the biggest challenges we continue to face is the condition of the limestone portions of the trail. In 2018, Tom Byle, an engineer with the Kent County Road Commission, investigated the composition of the limestone aggregate on the CIS Trail. It was discovered that although the limestone used was consistent with the DNR specifications - 100% crushed carbonate - our trail surface is magnesium carbonate rather than calcium carbonate. The major difference is that calcium carbonate typically hardens, magnesium carbonate does not permanently harden. In 2018 the DNR received a grant to find a solution, and a test area west of St. Johns was chosen to lay 6 different surface types. See the article in this issue by Barry Culham to learn more about this experiment.

On a brighter note, we are pleased to note that our communities and trail users are taking pride and ownership of the CIS trail. Thank you to our communities for mowing the grass, plowing snow and providing trash cans where the trail lies within their jurisdiction. And we also thank our trail users for being proactive in helping us by taking pictures, getting license plate numbers and talking to individuals misusing the trail (people driving their vehicles, riding their snowmobiles and horses on the trail, etc.).

It's truly awesome to see the trail enjoyed by a variety of uses and users. Whether you are a nature lover, photographer, geocacher, walker, runner, bicyclist or one of our volunteers (or all of the above) - this trail is YOUR trail. Get out and enjoy it!

2019 Annual Meeting/Trail User Appreciation

All are welcome to attend the Friends of the FMCIS Trail's 2019 Annual Membership Meeting starting at 7 pm on Tuesday, March 26, 2019 at the Clinton County Courthouse in St. Johns.

At this meeting we will be electing one new officer for each of the three counties (Clinton, Ionia and Shiawassee counties) to serve three year terms.

Public comments are welcome at this meeting.

Currently under consideration is a Trail User Appreciation event, held at a different time of year. We are exploring different ideas as to the type of event (picnic? bike ride/run? nature walk?), location, and time of year (summer? fall?). If you would like to provide input on this "event", or serve on the planning committee, please email us at cistrail@gmail.com. So stay tuned!

Support Your Trail

... by becoming a member or renewing your membership in the Friends of the FMCIS Trail. Dues remain at the same low cost: Individual - \$5.00; Family - \$10.00; and Corporate - \$100.00. These membership dues help us pay for trail promotion and events, purchase of trail amenities, maintenance and development of our website, and of course, publication of our newsletter and brochures. It also gives dues paying members the added privilege of running for and participating in board elections. Is there a better deal out there? Membership application/renewal forms are included with this newsletter, but can be found on our website - www.cistrail.org.

News from the Michigan Department of Natural Resources

Excerpted from the MTGA email newsletter:

Michigan Department of Natural Resources has a new director:

Daniel Eichinger was appointed as Director of the Michigan Department of Natural Resources (DNR) on Dec. 27, 2018. Prior to joining the DNR as director, he served as executive director of Michigan United Conservation Clubs, the nation's most effective state-based conservation organization. In that role, he led MUCC's return as a driving force for conservation and our outdoor heritage.

Eichinger holds a bachelor's degree in Political Theory and Constitutional Democracy and a Master of Science in Fisheries and Wildlife from Michigan State University. He also holds a Master of Public Administration degree from Central Michigan University. A native of Holland, Michigan, he resides in western Isabella County with his wife and their two children.

New DNR Southwest Trails Specialist

DNR has split the Southern Michigan Trails into two separate regions - the Southwest and the Southeast. Our trail is located in the Southwest Region and Jill Sell has recently been assigned as our new Trail Specialist.

Jill started with the DNR in early November of 2018. For the past 8 years she has worked for Kalamazoo County Parks, first as a Park Manager where she performed park and trail maintenance. Most recently she has served as the Trail Project Coordinator for the Kalamazoo River Valley Trail where she applied for funding, coordinated the project and worked with local communities on other regional trail projects. Jill graduated from Grand Valley State University with a degree in Natural Resources Management. She lives near South Haven with her husband, son and dog.

Winter 2019

MONTHLY MEETINGS . . .

. . . are open to the public. We generally meet on the second Wednesday at 6 p.m. at the Clinton County Courthouse in St. Johns, Michigan. However, please check our website to confirm site and date. If you would like to attend one of our meetings, please check our website www.cistrail.org or contact Kathy Simon at 989/593-3642.

MISSION OF THE FRIENDS OF THE FRED MEIJER CLINTON-IONIA-SHIAWASSEE TRAIL

To promote the use and enjoyment of a safe, multi-use trail for non-motorized recreation along the Fred Meijer CIS Trail between Ionia and Owosso, Michigan.

THE BOARD OF THE FRED MEIJER CIS TRAIL

Our current board members are:

Ionia County:

- Dave Weber (2019)
- Janice Gustafson, Treasurer (2020)
- Doug Hyland (2021)

Clinton County:

- John Salemi, Vice Chairperson (2019)
- Allen Martin (2020)
- Kathy Simon, Secretary (2021)

Shiawassee County:

- Rick Church, Chairperson (2019)
- Pamela Weisenburger (2020)
- Ardelle Rodgers (2021)

www.cistrail.org
cistrail@gmail.com



Be sure to "like" us on Facebook
www.facebook.com/fmcistrail

News from Michigan Trails and Greenways Alliance Bob Wilson, Executive Director

Michigan Trails and Greenways Alliance fully embraces Governor Whitmer's theme of bringing the people of Michigan together by building bridges rather than creating new divides. The Governor's vision of bringing the people of Michigan together is consistent with the results that trail-building produces. The nation's leading trail state already has established the foundation necessary to help complete that work of unification by bringing our citizens together through a vast network of land and water trails. Michigan Trails pledges its support to that vision by offering its work to continue Michigan's leadership role.



Trails are literally Michigan's "front porch," bringing people out from their homes to experience the wonders of the state's natural, historical and cultural resources. Trails allow Michiganders the freedom of meeting members of their community, sharing common bonds of friendship, volunteerism and conserving the public trust.

From our Trail Manager - Barry Culham

As you have read in the Overview, one of our challenges is the trail surface. This past summer the DNR set up six test sections on the trail between DeWitt and Airport roads just west of St. Johns. The first three sections are: 1) recycled asphalt screened to 1/2"; 2) Agriculture Lime with 25% stone mixed; and 3) Agriculture Lime with 50% stone mix. The last three sections are various thickness of Agriculture Lime (3", 4" and 6", respectively), mixed in with our existing limestone surface. The DNR plans to wait for at least one year to determine how they perform in the different seasons (particularly in the spring thaws) before they make a decision on the best solution. If you ride your bicycle between DeWitt and Airport roads we are very interested in your experience. Please email us at cistrail@gmail.com on which section you feel is best and why.

Over 200 dead and fallen trees have been removed from the trail in the past two years, many by our volunteers. I would like to thank ALL the volunteers for their past and ongoing help in keeping the trail clear and clean. This trail is maintained by volunteers. So when you see a volunteer on the trail, please be sure to thank them! (If you see fallen trees blocking the trail, please email us with details, including location.)

This coming June we will be crack sealing and seal coating the asphalt in Fowler, Pewamo and Muir. More information will be posted when it is available on our website and Facebook page.

As always, you can keep up with what's going on via our website and Facebook page. We have also started notifying individuals by email. If you would like to be added to our email list, please send your name and email address to cistrail@gmail.com.

Spring Clean-Up Day - April 27, 2019

Want to make a difference on the trail? Or would you like to volunteer, but have limited time? Then mark your calendar for Saturday, April 27. The Friends' Group invites you to join us at our Trail Clean Up Day.

Watch for more information on our website - www.cistrail.org - or our Facebook page.

CIS Trail - Yesterday and Today

If you travel down the CIS trail between Ovid and Owosso, you will pass by the Owosso Speedway, a fixture both in the Owosso area and in Michigan auto racing. After all, it's been there since 1939 - 80 years. But what you may NOT know is that for two of those 80 years it was a POW camp.

During WW II the US government was setting up POW camps around the country - 25 in Michigan alone. Owosso Speedway was a dirt track at the time, but standing unused during the war. "Camp Owosso" was erected to house captured German prisoners of war.



Photo from the National Archives - "German Prisoners of War at a camp near Owosso, Michigan, being paid with canteen checks by Camp Commander Captain Ohrt." 8-8-44 Photo by Sgt. S.L. Hertel.

"Physically, the camp consisted of a stockade fence surrounded by a high-wire fence topped with several strands of barbed wire. The public was not permitted access to the site and signs posted along M-21 warned motorists that it was unlawful to stop or park. At night floodlights illuminated the fence and adjacent area."¹

Prisoners were given the choice of being confined to the camp, or working (under guard) on local farms or at canning factories (Roach Canning in Owosso and Aunt Janes Pickle Factory near New Lothrop). Not surprisingly, most chose to work, preferring farm work over the factories, since the local farmers often gave them extra food. Although the prisoners were WW II POW's, many of the latter ones were not sympathetic to the Nazi regime, but were forced to serve under Hitler. Many seemed to prefer their POW life over fighting in the trenches and simply wanted to return home.

"Most of the prisoners at the Owosso camp in 1944 had been captured in North Africa. By 1945 men from the European theater, particularly Italy were also housed there. It is estimated that between 200 to 1,000 prisoners were held at this camp. An exact number is not known as all POW records were returned to Germany, and the camp administrative records were disposed of in the 1950's."²



Eventually Camp Owosso was closed and the Owosso Speedway re-opened. (For more information on Camp Owosso, visit the websites cited below for this article.)

¹ "Owosso Speedway and 'Prisoner of War' Camp History" website (<http://shiwasseehistory.com/prison.html>)

² Shiawassee District Library website (http://www.sdl.lib.mi.us/history/pow_camp.html).

Contact Us!

- **Report problems** - Report any unauthorized uses along the trail to our email: cistrail@gmail.com. (Include location and your contact information.)
- **Emergencies on the trail** - call 9-1-1