



The Trailblazer

2016 Was a Busy Year!

One of our biggest challenges in 2016 was getting a handle on the maintenance needs of a 42 mile trail. Mowing schedules, volunteer coordination, weed control, downed trees - the list goes on and on. And even though there are many other trails to use as samples, it is still a daunting task. One of our board members, Barry Culham, offered to step down from the board and volunteer his services as a trail manager on a trial basis and we took him up on his generous offer (more on Barry and his background in this newsletter). Barry will be presenting a report on the state of the trail at our 2017 Annual Meeting.

2016 also saw a lot of activity on the trail. Just to name a few: 5k, 10k and half marathon races throughout the summer in Ionia and St. Johns; construction of an impressive new trailhead in the Village of Fowler (to be opened spring of 2017); an MSU sponsored trail use study conducted along the trail in September; the ribbon cutting ceremony of a new connector/pedestrian bridge in November by the villages of Muir and Lyons; and in December, a "train ride" for youngsters down the trail in St. Johns. And to top it off, we've seen numerous cross country (as in "across the USA") bicycle trekkers using our trail.

We hope you've been enjoying the trail!

2017 Annual Meeting

Come join us at our 2017 Annual Membership Meeting! This year's annual membership meeting will be held at 7 pm at the AgroLiquid headquarters in St. Johns on Wednesday, March 8, 2017 (3055 M-21, St. Johns, MI 48879). Our speakers will be Nikki Van Bloem, Trail Planning Specialist from the Michigan Department of Natural Resources (see article by Nikki) and Barry Culham, FMCIS Trail Manager. Barry will give us a wrap up of 2016 maintenance activities and what to look forward to in 2017.

Tours of AgroLiquid will be held between 6 and 7 p.m., so come early if you'd like to participate!

See you there!

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

Nikki Van Bloem, DNR Southern Michigan Trails Specialist

It has been an eventful year in trails. In 2016 my position of Southern Michigan Trail Specialist was added, prior to this the southern half of the lower peninsula did not have a dedicated staff person. Duties were covered by specialists in the north such as Annamarie Bauer or our Non-Motorized Program Specialist Kriss Bennett. Annamarie still spends quite a bit of her time working on trails in NW Michigan, but is also the planner for state park projects in that area. Kriss has been focusing on larger statewide programs such as development of the Iron Belle Trail and working with our various grant programs. My region is the southern 30 counties, roughly Muskegon to St. Johns to Port Huron, working with the management and development of state owned rail trails, regional connections to state parks, and about 750 miles of snowmobile trail in SW Michigan. Needless to say, no two work days are alike.

There were a few trail projects that wrapped up this year. The 22 mile William Field Memorial Hart-Montague Trail State Park was repaved early last summer. The Northwestern State Trail was completed which was the final link in the Great Lake to Lake Trail Route 3 connecting Alpena to Charlevoix via the North Western, North Central, and North Eastern State Trails and the Little Traverse Wheelway. The Iron Belle Trail continues to progress with some sections being opened, trailhead improvements, and signage. The DNR is currently in the process of evaluating the 2017 Iron Belle Grant applications. A number of trail projects across the state have received funding through the Michigan Natural Resources Trust Fund and Transportation Alternatives Program (TAP), so work continues on both Iron Belle and non-Iron Belle projects.

Winter 2017

MONTHLY MEETINGS . .

. . . are open to the public. We meet on the second Wednesday of the month at 7 pm. Meeting locations are generally at the Clinton County Courthouse in St. Johns, Michigan. However, please check our website to confirm location 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:

- Janice Gustafson, Treasurer (2017)
- Guy Buckingham, Vice Chairperson (2018)
- Dave Weber (2019)

Clinton County:

- Marshall Baker (2017)
- Kathy Simon, Secretary (2018)
- Kyle Knight, Chairperson (2019)

Shiawassee County:

- Pamela Weisenburger (2017)
- Ardelle Rodgers (2018)
- Rick Church (2019)

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

News from Michigan Trails and Greenways Alliance

Nancy Krupriar, Executive Director

The pace at Michigan Trails and Greenways Alliance has quickened a bit lately as I prepare to retire from my position as Executive Director. My 20 years of work in the trails arena, first with Rails to Trails Conservancy, and the last 12 with Michigan Trails and Greenways Alliance, has been an exciting ride, and it has been rewarding seeing the momentum and popularity of trails as each new one has been added to the state's non-motorized trail system. But above all, it will be the everyday communications with trail folks that I will miss, for they are some of the nicest, most dedicated people I know, and I hope to keep in touch with a few of them for they have truly become my friends.



Before I leave (sometime around June 1), we have a couple projects we are kicking off. Through the generous contribution of a donor who is a real enthusiast for the Great Lake to Lake Trail, we will embark upon the development of a signage program for this 250+ mile route from South Haven to Port Huron. The sign templates will be designed for most situations encountered along the route, whether for change in direction, transition to a road route, connectors to other trails, trailhead identification, or major destinations. Once the templates are done, communities will be able to produce and install them along the route. We are also doing some work on finding another source of non-motorized trail funding. We are starting by taking stock of what Michigan has and then strategizing what direction we need to go and what actions need to be taken to generate additional funding for trail maintenance.

So as I prepare to leave for my new home in Charlevoix, I will wistfully take stock of all we have accomplished here at MTGA and look forward to watching new developments to come in the years ahead. And I relish the thought of the many trail trips I will take on all the great trails in northern Michigan! So, to all my CIS Trail Friends, I say, I will miss you and "keep on keeping on" all that you do for your communities with your beautiful trail!

We have a (Volunteer) Trail Manager!

The Friends of the Fred Meijer CIS Trail are excited to announce the appointment of Barry Culham as our new volunteer Trail Manager. Mr. Culham, formerly a board member of the Friends Group, is also the Shiawassee County public representative to the Mid-West Michigan Trail Authority. He is a true trail enthusiast. He is retired after working the last 18 years as Assistant Director of Michigan Trails and Greenways Alliance (MTGA) where one of his job duties included directing the week long Michigander Bicycle Tour showcasing Michigan's fabulous trail system.



As our first Trail Manager, Barry hopes to set a baseline of what the job might entail for future years. He will be coordinating mowing, weed spraying, surface repairs, downed trees and branches and other maintenance issues, as well as being a point person for our

volunteers. Trail users will be able to report problems on the trail to Barry via e-mail (cistrail@gmail.com) or voicemail (989-224-8944, ext. 285).

If you see Barry on the trail, be sure to stop and say hello!

Muir/Lyons Connector

When a new bridge was constructed over the Maple River, officials from Village of Muir had a dream to connect Muir and Lyons (approximately one mile south of Muir) for foot traffic. They began a massive fund raising effort to renovate the old crumbling bridge into a pedestrian bridge, and at the same time create a trail spur from the FMCIS Trail in Muir to Lyons.



Ribbon cutting for Twin Rivers Bridge trail spur

Designed and engineered by Prein and Newhof, the Twin Rivers Bridge is a testament to community efforts to improve their surroundings. The bridge project received funds from fund raisers, private and public donations and grants (including the Village of Muir, Lyons Township, Lions Club, Consumers Energy, the Ionia County Board of Commissioners, DALMAC, MDOT, MDNR and the Meijer Foundation). It's well worth the trip down the FMCIS trail to Muir just to view and travel down this beautiful newly renovated and repurposed bridge.

MSU Study

As part of a service project, students from MSU (under the direction of Dr. Chuck Nelson) conducted a survey along the trail in Ovid, St. Johns, Fowler, Pewamo and Muir on September 10 and 11. The students gathered valuable information from trail users on suggestions for improvements. The results should provide us with an objective snapshot of users and trail uses. You are welcome to listen to Dr. Nelson present their findings at our April 12 board meeting. Watch our website and/or facebook page for links to the survey results when they become available.

CIS Trail Hotline

Pass the word - we now have a CIS Trail Hotline! The City of St. Johns has generously provided us with a voice mail box. You can now leave a message to report problems along the trail, such as branches/trees down, blockages, holes and unauthorized uses right from your cell phone (or home phone) at 989/224-8944, ext 285. You should note on the message where the problem is (nearest road crossing or mile marker) and your contact information. But, please note - this is a voice mail box. It is monitored on a daily basis. If there is an emergency, you will need to call 9-1-1.



You may also contact our trail manager, Barry Culham, at our e-mail address - cistrail@gmail.com - to report trail problems.

Be sure to join us at our 2017 Annual Meeting and on our website to learn more about what is happening on our trail!