



Elora Cataract Trailway Association

Association Chair - Tom Skimson

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Spring 2007

Message from the President

Tom Skimson - Association Chair

This morning, March 22, the day following the vernal equinox, a steady rain is washing away the grit from the roads and sidewalks and is melting the last vestiges of snowdrifts left in the yard. The snow is sublimating, producing sheets of eerie mist and in the back garden a crocus plant has pushed through to the surface. Hello Spring!

Today's date is also a reminder that in one month, **Sunday April 22, the Elora Cataract Trailway AGM. will be held at the Belwood Hall.** This year, Tim Wood, the CVC-ECTA liaison and also vice president of Hike Ontario will talk about the future of trails in Ontario. There exist both concerns and opportunities for trail development in the province many of which should be of concern to our membership. We look forward to Tim's presentation.

With this newsletter you will find a membership renewal application. If you have not already done so, please consider renewing. Your membership fees allow ECTA and its board on your behalf to continue to have input into how the trail is used and managed. In addition your membership fees contribute to publishing and distributing our very popular map and pamphlet, a quite significant service to the businesses and communities along the trailway. Furthermore membership fees have helped finance, with the cooperation of the Conservation Authorities, school students and Greenspaces for Wellington, the planting of trees along the trail. Membership fees help support, through club memberships, Ontario Trails Council and Hike Ontario, the major provincial voices for trail development policies. Trailway Association membership is not a prerequisite to using the trail but is a way for local citizens to express their appreciation and support for this very valuable recreational resource.

In addition to memberships individuals can also choose to donate through the Grand River Conservation Authority and the Credit Valley Conservation Foundations. All such donations will receive an income tax receipt. Funds donated this way will flow back to the trailway to be used at the discretion of the ECTA board for trail improvements and capital projects.

A number of trail supporters have asked about leaving bequests to the trailway and donating in memory of family or friends. You will shortly find, at local funeral homes in Fergus, Elora and Erin, donation envelopes which permit contributions to the ECTA through the conservation authority foundations.

On Sunday September 16 at 2 p.m. ECTA is holding a tree planting ceremony to honour Deryk Smith for his long standing contribution to the Elora Cataract Trailway. Deryk is a founding member and long time chair of ECTA who steered the trail through its prenatal

and formative stages. The ceremony will, in keeping with Deryk's personality, be short and low key but nonetheless will recognize his enormous dedication. We hope that trail members, users and friends will choose to join the celebration. Details are outlined elsewhere in the newsletter.

Lastly, I repeat the annual mantra to please **STAY OFF THE TRAIL** until the surface has dried and hardened. Hoof prints left by horse back riders are particularly damaging to the trail surface but so also are foot prints left by walkers and tire marks left by cyclists. Your cooperation will lead to a smoother trail for us all to enjoy once the wetness of spring subsides.

I wish each of you an enjoyable spring, summer and fall season on the Elora |Cataract Trailway and I look forward to seeing you at the AGM on April 22.

Trail Musings

by: Sarah Hennekens

Gd.9 student Centre Wellington High School

Chickadees landing on my hand; silence, except for the purring of my bike; greeting hikers; spotting wildlife. These are all happenings of the Cataract Trail. My first memories of the trail were in the bike trailer, on the back of my mom's or dad's bike. Since then, apart from walking, I've traveled by alley cat, scooter and now my own bike. Without the trail, traveling to town would be different. It connects the country, in which I live, to the towns from Elora to Cataract. Even though I enjoy walking on the trail during the winter, it's in the spring that I wait with anticipation for the trail to be solid enough to bike. During the spring, summer and fall, the trail is the connection between my home and the surrounding world. Every afternoon, on the way home from school, it is calming to bike along the forested trail, listening and watching. The Elora-Cataract Trail - what an asset to our community!

Trailway Survey

Sandra Moss - Volunteer Coordinator

Surveys were conducted along the Trailway at six different spots between Gerrie Road and Lake Belwood from July to the end of October of 2003 by members of the Trailway Association. The purpose was to determine exactly who the trail users are, why and how frequently they use the

Trail and to collect suggestions on how best to improve the Trail for the users . Of the over 300 people surveyed 200 were residents of Centre Wellington and the majority of them were over 20 years of age. Fifty percent of the respondents used the Trail between 4 and 5 times per week for walking (47%) and/ or bicycling (67%) . Of the over 300 people surveyed only 31 were members of the Trailway! Many were unaware that the Trailway Association existed . The surveyors were supplied with information and membership packages and many people displayed some interest in becoming members .

Although most people appeared to be quite satisfied with the Trailway , the most frequent negative comments concerned the amount of dog dirt , speeding bicycles and the poor signage along the section through Fergus . It was also suggested by many of those surveyed that the trail be groomed in winter to facilitate walking and that more information be available on plants and animals found along the trail and on the adjacent lands .

Tree Work along the Elora Cataract Trailway Michael Bradley - GRCA Forestry Operations

Many trail users probably noticed that the GRCA removed a substantial number of trees along the Elora Cataract Trailway in 2006. This was part of the GRCA hazard tree work aimed at maintaining trail safety.

Most of the trees removed were elm trees. After this rail line was abandoned, new trees started to germinate along the trail side in the area that would have been kept clear by the railway company. Elm trees germinate very quickly in this type of area, and a large population of elms colonized this space. American elm, slippery elm, and rock elm are all types of elm trees that grow along the trailway. These elm trees are susceptible to a disease called Dutch Elm disease, which infects elm trees after they reach an age of about 25 years. Starting in 2003, we started to see a large number of elm trees dying along the trailway. Other hazardous trees were also pruned or removed, and branches encroaching on the trail were cleared back.

Some of the tree work done last year was performed by a tree service under contract with the GRCA; the remainder of the work was completed by the GRCA Forestry crew. In some areas, the debris from the trees was left in the natural area beside the trail, where it will decompose and help replenish the soil. In other areas where space was limited, the trees were chipped and the chip was spread on the soil at the trailside, where it will help to reduce erosion. The work was funded by the Grand River Conservation Foundation and GRCA Forestry Operations.

There is still some tree work to be done on the trail near Fergus, which is planned for July and August of 2007. The trail is also inspected biannually for hazard trees by the GRCA.

Michael Bradley
GRCA Forestry Operations
March 22, 2007

Notice Board

Plan to attend the AGM Sunday April 22,
2007 at Belwood Hall,
2 – 4 p.m.

Guest Speaker
Tim Wood

CVC Conservation Land Management
Coordinator

Topic

Trends and Issues for Trails In Ontario.

***Neighbours, friends and trail users
are cordially invited to join in a tree
planting ceremony to honour***

Deryk Smith

Sunday September 16, 2-3 p.m.

The planting will take place on the trail
between Fergus and Elora.
Enter at the Gerrie Rd. or Beatty Line
parking areas and follow the signs.

Greenlands |Centre Wellington invites you
to attend:

**“Mapping A Greenland Future”
a community workshop focussed on
securing a system of greenlands .**

The workshop will be held at the Light House
Restaurant
(Grand River Raceway) Wellington Road 21 in
Elora.

Saturday April 28, 2007 between 8:30 a.m.
and 1:00 p.m.

Details at: www.greenlandcw.org or 519-843-
3650

Editor's Note:

As this is my final edition of the newsletter I want to say a very special thank you to the many contributors who over the past number of years have answered my many calls for help in supplying articles, ideas and pictures to meet yet another deadline. I also appreciate the many volunteers who have helped stuff the envelopes.

Editing this newsletter has been truly a meaningful volunteer activity and I continue to feel that the work of the trailway board is essential to maintaining the partnerships with the GRCA and CVC so that the communities along the ECTA corridor are able to enjoy the beauty, the solitude and the joy of using this linear parkway.

I do want to salute Tom Skimson who has followed in the very large footsteps of Deryk Smith. Both of these individuals deserve our heartfelt thanks for providing excellent leadership and handling of the myriad of details that end up at the Chair's desk.

Thank you one and all.

Burna R. Wilton

Please share your newsletter with a friend and hope to see you at the 2007 trail events and on the trail.