



TRAIL NEWS

ISSUE #1

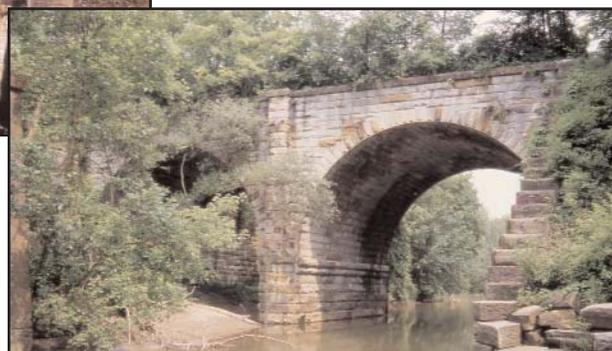
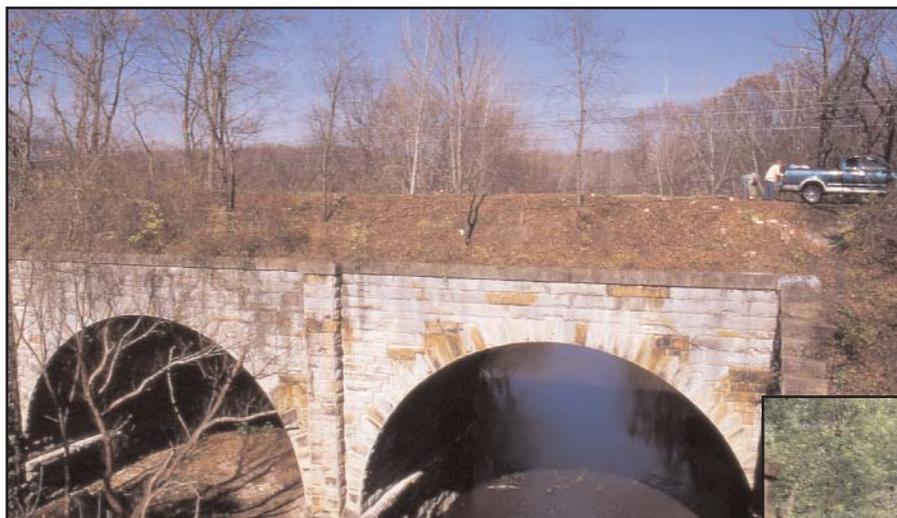
HURON COUNTY

SPRING 2005

NORTH COAST INLAND TRAIL

BIG PROGRESS

***VOLUNTEERS
READY TRAIL
OVER STONE
VIADUCT
FOR GRAND
OPENING
SOON !***



THE TRAIL is finally visible in this view as trail members remove trees at the stone viaduct over the East Branch of the Huron River just west of Norwalk. Compare this November view (above) with the over-grown July view (right).

NORWALK - Trains haven't rolled over the 1871 stone viaduct in more than thirty years, but walkers, bikers, and equestrians will be rolling soon thanks to the work of the volunteer members who cut through miles of trees and brush to expose this scenic wonder.

"It's the scenic highlight of the North Coast Inland Trail," says FRTTI President Gordon Oney. "The view from the viaduct will be amazing in any season of the year," he added.

With the trees removed, the viaduct is ready for grading and a fence. The replacement of a collapsed culvert just east of here and the opening of the viaduct are key factors in pushing the trail west from North West Street in Norwalk toward Monroeville and eventually Bellevue.

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MAYOR LESCH SPEAKS AT ANNUAL MEETING



Firelands Rails to Trails was fortunate to have Norwalk Mayor Sue Lesch as the speaker at the Annual Meeting on February 2, 2005 at Berry's in Norwalk.

She started out by saying she and her husband, Al, enjoy riding a tandem bike on Ohio's bike paths. One of the more valuable things they've learned is that when taking a ride on a long trail, like the B&O Trail at Mansfield, you should make allowance for the return trip. You can't expend all your energy outbound!

The Mayor's remarks indicate she is very aware of the need to have a trail through (or around) Norwalk as part of the North Coast Inland Trail. She noted Uptown merchants have spoken of the desire to get a trail into the area. The Mayor also told of the many citizens who had discussed of the need for enhanced open space, walking paths, and bike paths during the public forums as a prelude to Norwalk's new comprehensive plan. She encouraged FRTTI members to stay involved in that process.

Mayor Lesch was also frank about current economic conditions, saying "If we had extra money right now, I would add a policeman."



TRAIL BRIDGE COMPLETED AT HALFWAY ROAD



Oh what a beautiful bridge!
Thanks to many hours of volunteer labor, FRTTI now boasts a bridge so well done people would swear it was professionally constructed.

The bridge project started on a hot summer day with the pouring of bridge beams in concrete forms filled with rebar. While the beams were curing, Mallory Clemons performed the dirt excavation that allowed us to set the beams. Joe Wilhelm hauled a truckload of large stone that volunteers manually put in place to reinforce the banks. The next step was to pay Ohio Edison to turn off the power lines above to allow Aber's Crane Service to carefully place the beams with an 85-ton crane. Special drills and epoxy were used to set the bolts that hold the sturdy wooden railings to ensure the safety of trail users. This project has been in development stages for over two years and is now finally complete. Special thanks to our volunteers for their hard labor and everyone that donated financially to make this important bridge a success.

VOLUNTEER BRUSH CUTTERS MAKE PROGRESS AND NEW FRIENDS

They come from all walks of life - but all want to walk the same path...the North Coast Inland Trail. A January snowstorm was no match for this group of volunteers, which included a teacher, a railroad conductor, an electrician, a military veteran, a nurse, a sales rep, a part-time farmer, a retired art teacher and other trail group members.



WELL FED after a delicious breakfast at the Monroeville Knights of Columbus, these volunteers cut through nearly a half mile of trees and brush in a matter of a few hours as the trail is cleared just west of Rt. 547 toward Bellevue.

"Work Day" tasks on the trail vary as much as the weather, but one thing is constant: A lot of work gets accomplished and strangers leave as friends.

Healthy Reasons to Support Rails to Trails

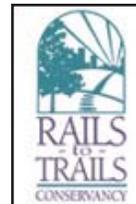
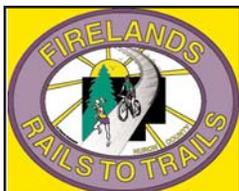
Rail-trails create healthy recreation opportunities by providing people with attractive, safe, accessible and no-cost places to cycle, walk, hike, jog or skate. Trails help people of all ages incorporate exercise into their daily routines by connecting them with places they want or need to go; facilitating active, healthy communities.

In a recent report on causes of death for Americans, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) addressed the national public health crisis stemming from physical inactivity. Most Americans make the connection between exercise and health, but many people still lead sedentary lives. According to the CDC report, 400,000 deaths in the U.S. in 2000 were related to poor diet and physical inactivity. These numbers were rivaled only by tobacco use at 435,000 deaths - a narrow margin. The study concluded, "Poor diet and physical inactivity may soon overtake tobacco as the leading cause of death." The alarming national statistics point to a growing health crisis that impacts Americans of all ages in urban and rural settings.

Fortunately, the human toll and the economic costs of inactivity are avoidable. The U.S. Surgeon General recommends moderate physical activity -- 30 minutes a day, five days a week -- to combat the threat of diseases including high blood pressure, coronary heart disease, Type 2 diabetes, certain forms of cancer and depression. In addition to the U.S. Surgeon General, the American Cancer Society and the American Heart Association have joined forces to educate people on the importance of exercise in significantly reducing the instances of heart disease and some types of cancer.. The National Center for Chronic Disease Prevention and Health Promotion (CDC) trumpets the positive impact trails can have on the overall health of their users.

Rail-trails provide ideal settings for enjoyable recreation and regular exercise like walking the dog, biking and roller blading. Individuals must choose to exercise, but communities can make that choice easier by providing attractive and safe networks of sidewalks, bikeways and trails for people to use.

Adapted from a Rails Conservancy article. For more information on how Trails can impact your personal - and our community's - health, visit their website: <http://www.railtrails.org/>



WORTHY OF RECOGNITION...

Firelands Rails to Trails is an all-volunteer organization. As such, everything that gets done is the result of someone stepping forward as if to say "I'll do that". We had a lot of folks step forward in 2004. Some, among many, that stood out were:

Paul Douglas volunteered to put together a database for all of our Members, Friends, and Prospects information. Now we finally have a database that can be built upon as our organization grows.

Rich Libbee came forward, riding on his Steiner, saying "I can do that mowing". And he proceeded to keep the grass and weeds in check during the summer 2004.

Larry McGlinchy gave invaluable advice for the design and construction of the bridge at Halfway Road and for the replacement of the large culvert near Northwest Street.

Fred Deering has been a trails leader in Northern Ohio for many years. He has continued to be a most effective spokesman for us, in addition to opening his billfold for FRTTI.

Joe Mantey came to us with computer skills, publications experience, and a laser printer saying "Yes, I can put together a new brochure and newsletter, and in color". You see it now!

Aren't we fortunate to have folks like these to keep things moving forward!

MONROEVILLE: FULL STEAM AHEAD



A fresh snowfall blanketed the roof of the "Bridge of Dreams" (left) on the inspection tour by FRTTI members. This covered bridge will serve as the basis for design of the Huron River Bridge (right) at Route 99 in Monroeville.

On January 30th, three of our members, Gordon Oney, Stan and Colleen Bernhardt, took a road trip to Knox County. The purpose of this trip was to photograph and gather information on the construction of the covered bridge known as the "Bridge of Dreams."

Upon arriving at our destination near Brinkhaven, we were met by Bill Crawford, the gentleman who was the driving force behind the construction of the covered bridge. The "Bridge of Dreams" is 366 feet in length and has a twelve foot wide inside measurement. It is constructed on large steel girders remaining from railroad days, very similar to what we have at Monroeville. The bridge provides safe transportation for hikers, bicyclists, horsemen, and horses and buggies of the Amish community, over the Mohican River.

The information gathered on this trip will be used for inspiration and to help our group plan and construct a covered bridge over the Huron River at Route 99 in Monroeville - another scenic highlight on the way to Bellevue.

DID YOU KNOW ???

The North Coast Inland Trail crosses four bridges between Norwalk and Monroeville...two of which are over 100' long. In addition, there are only two road crossings, making this section of trail one of the most scenic and safest recreational trails in Ohio. The North Coast Inland Trail is a nature-lover's delight. It passes through dense hardwood forests with abundant wildlife and foliage and provides panoramic vistas across Ohio's wide open spaces. The trail is also a vital economic asset to the area and provides a unique recreational link among communities.

TRAIL HISTORY



TIMELINE

- 1853:** Toledo, Norwalk & Cleveland Railroad completes line through Norwalk
- 1869:** Lake Shore & Michigan Southern RR assumes operation and expands Norwalk Locomotive Shops
- 1914:** New York Central empire merges the Lake Shore & Michigan Southern
- 1919:** Norwalk Locomotive Shops Closed; Line through Norwalk becomes a secondary branch line
- 1968:** NYC and Pennsylvania RR merge and form Penn Central - soon to be bankrupt
- 1973:** Penn Central abandons "The Norwalk Branch" through Huron County
- 1974 to 1999:** Nature reclaims the line as a hardwood forest takes over
- 2000:** Firelands Rails to Trails, Inc. is chartered and organized
- 2000 to 2004:** FRTTI bikers, hikers and equestrians become lumberjacks and clear miles of overgrown trail
- 2005:** Norwalk to Monroeville section of the North Coast Inland Trail to officially open

BIG CULVERT LINKS TRAIL EAST AND WEST



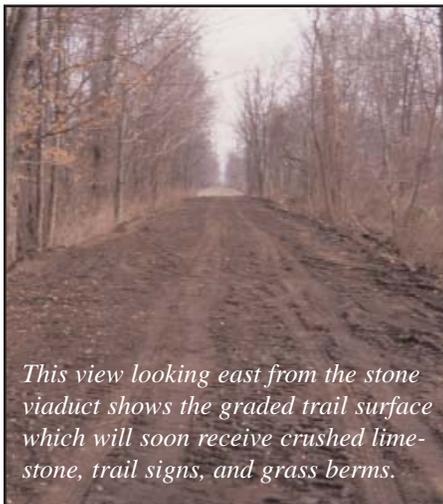
Big equipment transformed the "big washout" into the "big culvert" which finally linked Norwalk with the stone viaduct.

In October, 2004, a major hurdle to opening the Norwalk to Monroeville section of the North Coast Inland Recreational Trail was overcome.

This hurdle was the replacement of the Northwest Street culvert, believed to be about 130 years old. It deteriorated over the years and caused the final abandonment of the line in 1973. It totally collapsed in 2004, making the trail impassable. The old culvert was a 120 foot long by 48 inch sandstone box culvert. The new culvert is a 120 foot long by 48 inch round plastic pipe.

The work was able to be completed because of a generous financial contribution by the park districts that own the property. The five days of work was accomplished by a crew from Haynes Construction, Inc. of Collins, Ohio.

TRAIL SURFACE READY FOR CRUSHED LIMESTONE



This view looking east from the stone viaduct shows the graded trail surface which will soon receive crushed limestone, trail signs, and grass berms.

During the course of the winter Joe Wilhelm of Monroeville has been grading the trail surface from Northwest Street toward Monroeville. This work is to create the twenty-foot wide surface that will enable parallel pedestrian/bike and horse "lanes". The parking area at Northwest Street was also enlarged and leveled to create additional trailhead space for vehicles.

When conditions permit, after spring rains, and the soils have dried and settled, final leveling will be performed. Following that, crushed limestone will be spread and compacted where necessary to create a firm surface.

Then, fences will be constructed on bridges and embankments and trail signs will be installed to prepare for a Grand Opening Celebration this Summer.



A TRUE MULTI-USE TRAIL

WELCOME EQUESTRIANS to the only public bridle trail in Huron County!

When the North Coast Inland Trail opens between Norwalk and Monroeville, 8 miles (out and back) of scenic riding will be available to equestrians. The trail is actually two trails: One for pedestrians and bikers, and a parallel trail for horses.

The trail is level and dry, with three bridges and access to water at the East Branch of the Huron River. It's great place to ride or drive your horse without traveling long distances to the trailhead. The trail will be wide enough to accommodate carts or buggies. Trailer parking will be available at the Northwest St. trailhead in Norwalk and the Peru Center Rd. trailhead in Monroeville. For more information on equine activities on the rail trail please contact Joyce Dupont at jdupont@ashland.edu.



Just what does it mean to be a multi-use trail? On a sunny February "inspection tour" it meant our two horses shared the trail with a jogger, walkers and a coyote.

FRTTI UPCOMING EVENTS



| <u>WORK DAYS</u> | | | |
|------------------|-------------|------------------|-----------------|
| <u>DATE</u> | <u>TIME</u> | <u>LOCATION</u> | <u>ACTIVITY</u> |
| 3-20 | 8:00 | KofC Monroeville | Breakfast |
| 3-20 | 9:00 | Williams Rd. | Brush Removal |
| 4-3 | 8:00 | To be determined | |
| 4-17 | 8:00 | KofC Monroeville | Breakfast |
| 4-17 | 9:00 | To be determined | |
| 5-1 | 8:00 | To be determined | |
| 5-15 | 8:00 | To be determined | |

All work day tasks and locations are confirmed via email the week before.

IMPORTANT UPCOMING FRTTI EVENTS

JULY 4 PARADE

OPEN HOUSE - JULY

COUNTY FAIR - AUGUST

HEALTH EXPO - FALL

2005 GOALS & PROJECTS

Firelands Rails To Trails is a goal-oriented, all volunteer organization. Members choose several important tasks every year and put a lot of energy into accomplishing these projects. Individual members volunteer responsibility for spear-heading these efforts.

Some of the goals set by members for 2005 include:

- Officially Open the Norwalk (Northwest Street) to Monroeville (Peru Center Rd.) Section.
- Continue brush and tree removal between Rt. 547 and Williams Rd. west of Monroeville.
- The publication of a regular newsletter for distribution to friends and members.
- Hosting the annual Open House this summer: inviting members, friends and the general public to come and walk the trail, take a horseback ride, and enjoy a cookout.
- Investigate attendance at the 2005 Chamber of Commerce Business Expo and the Health Fair.
- To build relationships with public officials including the Huron County Commissioners, Bellevue City Officials, and Lyme Township Trustees.
- Arrange for a crossing of the active Wheeling & Lake Erie Railway line at Monroeville.
- Design and Construct decking and railings on the Huron River bridge in Monroeville.
- Increase the number of trustees and members by using an expanded database.
- Participate in the 4th of July parade; Set up and man a booth at the Huron County Fair.
- Create a Firelands Rails to Trails Website

If any of these projects interest you, please do not hesitate to help. We need labor, tools, equipment, help with setting up and tearing down at different events, and we also need your ideas. Please contact us.....

WE NEED YOU TO PUT IT THROUGH !

HOW TO GET INVOLVED

- Join FRTTI for as little as \$10
- Sign up for our Email News
- Join us on one of our Work Days
- Tell some friends about it

"You're only a stranger once on the North Coast Inland Trail"

FIRELANDS RAILS TO TRAILS, INC. TRUSTEES AND OFFICERS

Stan Bernhardt
 Paul Douglas, Vice President
 Joyce Dupont
 Doug Jaqua, Treasurer
 Rich Libbee
 Joe Mantey
 Joe Missler, Secretary
 Gordon Oney, President

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