

communityconnections

Ohio

Trail Unites Unique Communities

Buggies and bikes came together on June 4, 2005—National Trails Day—in celebration and support of the Holmes County Trail. The rail-trail, which, when complete, will run 29 miles from Fredericksburg to Brinkhaven,

Ohio, is the first rail-trail in the nation to be designed specifically to accommodate the horse and buggies of the Amish community, according to

In attendance was Ohio Governor Bob Taft, who spoke to the crowd of approximately 2,500. In addition to the ribbon cutting, the trail hosted an Amish quilt and hand-made furniture auction. They raised approximately \$35,000, which will benefit further development and maintenance of the trail.

Simcak says she believes the joint efforts of the two communities are what makes the trail unique. "Whenever you incorporate horses into a trail, and particularly buggies, you have to have some tolerance, and everyone needs to be respectful." Simcak says the trail is a necessity for both recreation and as a safe transportation option for the Amish community. She

Oregon

Teaching on the Trails

Professors at Southern Oregon University (SOU) in Ashland, Ore., have taken their love of trails to the classroom. Andy Dungan, Dan Rubenson and Pat Acklin have developed a multi-discipline, three-pronged class that delves into the economics, business management, and geography of building a trail system in a community. And that community is their own back yard.

"The class is essentially a community-based, college service learning program," says Dungan, a management professor and Rails-to-Trails Conservancy member. "We're teaching the kids how to [develop trails], and we're learning at the same time, too."

The three classes, offered in 10-week quarter sessions, each focus on a particular angle of trail development. Students who want to continue involvement in the project can retake sections of the class, and participate in internships and special projects. And they aren't the only ones excited about a trail education.

Rubenson says the SOU administration has been looking for opportunities to give back to the community, and the trails outreach project fits the bill. "From our perspective, it's great to get students working on something that's authentic," he says. "Students have liked getting a better sense of how complicated and messy it is to do stuff in the real world. This isn't just doing an exercise out of a book."

One of the several trail possibilities in and around Ashland is the Rogue River Greenway, a potential



Bicyclists and buggies share the Holmes County Trail. Portions of the trail were recently paved, and a buggy lane was created.

Joan Simcak, director of Holmes County Rails to Trails Coalition.

On National Trails Day, the Amish and English (as the non-Amish are referred to) held a ribbon cutting ceremony to celebrate the paving of more than 10 miles of trail with an adjacent "chip and seal"-surfaced buggy track.

calls the success of the National Trails Day event a statement of community support.

"People are excited about the trail," she says. "They wanted to do something in return to support the cause."

For more information, visit www.holmestrail.org.



Ashland, Ore., community members scout out potential trail sites.

25-mile rail-with-trail. Rubenson's economics-based class surveyed the area to determine if people would support the greenway and the formation of a recreation district around the trail and river. Dungan's management-based class is looking to hold an organized bike ride next summer, using the Rogue River as a route.

Though the college course is still in its infancy, Rubenson believes it's already illustrating to students the "richness of true life" as they navigate the trail building process. "This is just the first term for something that will be ongoing for many years," he says. "We're really hoping to get some new trails out of it."

For more information visit www.sou.edu and www.roguerivergreenway.com.

Arkansas

Governor Stumps for Healthy Living

When Arkansas Governor Mike Huckabee's doctor told him he was digging his grave with a knife and fork, Huckabee recalls, he knew it was time to do "something drastic."

For the governor, that meant putting away the utensils and putting on the walking shoes. In two years (between Spring 2003 and Spring 2005), he lost more than 100 pounds walking and jogging on the Arkansas River Trail, a 14-mile rail-trail in Little Rock, Ark.

"Having places to walk, run and bike is an important factor in creating a culture of health in our society," says Huckabee. "If those places are available, a major excuse for failing to exercise is removed. Trails, of course, are safer than streets and highways. And beautiful trails with relaxing surroundings actually make it fun to exercise."

Huckabee's personal health quest is making a profound impact on Arkansas, and particularly the Little Rock trail community. In addition to his Healthy Arkansas campaign and Trails for Life Grant Program, Huckabee is supporting a one-mile link from the state capitol to the trail. "A link to the Arkansas River Trail would encourage thousands of state employees to exercise," he says. "We need people taking walking breaks rather than smoking breaks. That's my goal for state government in Arkansas."

Terry Eastin, Arkansas River Trail project coordinator with Eastin Outdoors, Inc., credit's the governor's trail advocacy with much of the progress of the trail which, in addition to added mileage, includes the construction of a health-focused "Medical Mile" trail section. The trail branch that would run from the capitol buildings would meet up

with the trail at the Medical Mile. "[Governor Huckabee] has been in complete support of the entire project," she says, and adds that the development of the trail has been a nonpartisan issue across the board. "The trail has been all about health,

Governor Huckabee (second from left) leads a walk as part of his Healthy Arkansas campaign.



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not politics. And that's how you can really get something done. You can take the politics out of it and make it about people getting healthier."

Since becoming an avid trail user, Governor Huckabee has written a book, "Quit Digging Your Grave With a Knife and Fork" (2005, Warner Publishing). The book shares Huckabee's newfound devotion to healthy living, and to trails. "My personal quest for health has convinced me that making trails available to the public should be a priority," he says. "We must stop treating snakebites and start killing snakes when it comes to public health. We need to encourage people to be healthy on the front end rather than just treating diseases on the back end."

For more information about Governor Huckabee's health initiatives, visit www.arkansas.gov/governor.

Florida

Trail Sweeps the Election

A rail-trail project in the small town of Lake Wales, Fla., proved its popularity—and heft—when two of its opponents were voted out of office in April 2005. The trail issue shared the ballot with the mayoral and commissioner slates, and for many Lake Wales Trail supporters the correlation was clear: Mayor Cliff Tonjes and Commissioner Albert Kirkland Sr., both trail opponents, lost their reelection bids, and the trail ordinance won.

Tonjes and Kirkland "got beat badly and everybody believes it has to do with the trail," says Noel Phetteplace, a member of the Friends of the Lake Wales Trail group and

Lake Wales Trail supporters Noel Phetteplace and Jake Rowe stand at the site of their future trail.



Rails-to-Trails Conservancy. "The trail basically beat them."

The saga dates back to 1989 when Lake Wales bought a two-mile stretch of unused rail corridor from CSX. In 1995, the town began talking about developing a rail-trail on the site, and the city commission pursued Transportation Enhancements (TE) funding. All appeared to be well, according to Friends group member Reid Hardman, until August 2004, when the city commission reversed its long-standing support for the trail and voted not to accept the nearly \$700,000 TE award. "It didn't make any sense," says Hardman.

He and others formed the Friends group, and organized community meetings to explain the benefits of trails. The opposition's biggest concern, Phetteplace says, was crime such as theft and vandalism. Phetteplace tried to reassure trail opponents by presenting RTC statistics, additional studies and the testimony of the local police chief saying trails provided a safe environment for recreation and exercise. But it wasn't until the Friends group collected enough support for a trail ordinance to be placed on the election ballot that the tide turned. The

pro-trail challengers to Tonjes and Kirkland won 58 percent of the vote and the yes/no trail provision won by 52 percent.

"People did not understand why the commissioners would be against the trail—something that was clearly for the benefit of a lot of people," says Phetteplace. "I think it was a case of underestimating the public's desire."

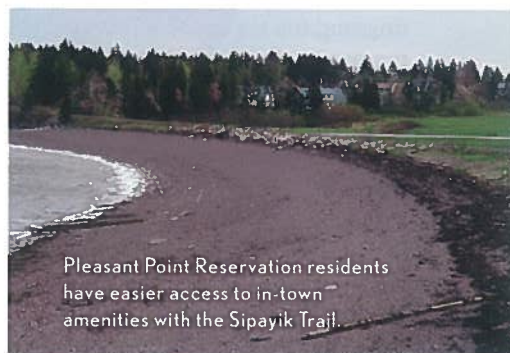
Maine

The Little Trail That Could

It's hard to imagine packing more benefits into 1.7 miles than the Passamaquoddy Tribe does with the Sipayik Trail. In Pleasant Point, a rural area on Maine's coast where public transportation is scarce, the trail has given the Pleasant Point Reservation community the gift of walkability to work, businesses, schools and recreation areas.

"The [trail] project is very important to our community," says Dana Altvater, Pleasant Point Reservation project manager. "We are a low-income community with many citizens who do not have cars or access to public transportation."

Altvater says a trail was first envisioned in the mid-1980s master plan for Pleasant Point. However



Rails-to-Trails Conservancy

In the Field

California Office:

26 O'Farrell Street, Suite 400
San Francisco, CA 94108
415-397-2220
rtc-ca@railtrails.org

Florida Office:

2623 Blairstone Road
Tallahassee, FL 32301
850-942-2379
rtcflorida@railtrails.org

Michigan Office:

416 South Cedar, Suite C
Lansing, MI 48912
517-485-6022
rtc-michigan@railtrails.org

Ohio Office:

30 Liberty Street
Canal Winchester, OH 43110
614-837-6782
rtc-ohio@railtrails.org

Northeast Region:

■ 2133 Market Street, Suite 222
Camp Hill, PA 17011
717-238-1717
northeast@railtrails.org

■ 11 Kearney Square, 4th Floor
Lowell, MA 01852
978-275-9777
betsy@railtrails.org

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the unused two-mile corridor, bought for approximately \$50,000 in 1995 by the reservation's housing department, was not initially intended for trail use. After the purchase, Altwater says the corridor "just sat there for awhile" until his brother, Eric, applied for a \$25,000 Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) grant to conduct a trail feasibility study.

With the study in hand, the tribe received \$248,000 in Transportation Enhancements money from the Maine Department of Transportation to be used for trail design and construction. BIA chipped in the balance and in November 2004, the Sipayik Trail opened to the public.

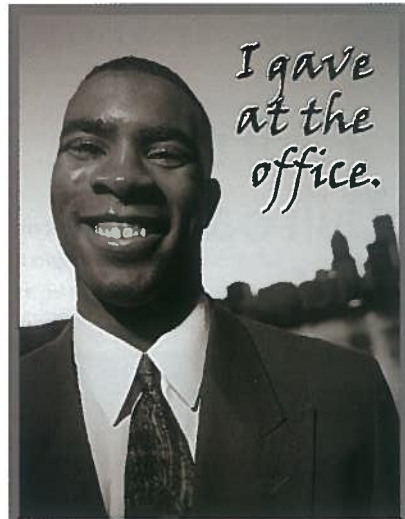
"The Sipayik Trail is probably one of the most popular projects we've done because we get everyone from children to elders walking," Altwater says. It runs through the reservation, linking with a new housing development and providing access to the local post office, restaurants and grocery stores. Midway it passes the tribal administration building, and administration employees get approximately 30 minutes daily to exercise on the trail.

Adjacent to a tidal river, the trail runs toward Passamaquoddy Bay, affording views across the water to Deer Island in New Brunswick, Canada. The trail provides access to a salt marsh that in the summer yields sweetgrass for basket-making and in the winter freezes over for ice-skating.

Altwater hopes that by 2006 the remaining 500 feet needed to connect the trail all the way to nearby Route 1 will be funded and completed. With the extension, the reservation residents will have even easier access to their community. For more information on the Sipayik Trail, visit www.wabanaki.com.

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