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MACOMB ORCHARD TRAIL ACCLAIMED NATIONWIDE
Rail-trail heralded across America for beauty, utility, and support from local community

WASHINGTON, D.C. – It has long been the toast of Macomb County and outdoor enthusiasts in eastern Michigan. Now, the Macomb Orchard Trail is being heralded across America.

The much-loved local rail-trail is this month being featured by the national trails organization, Rails-to-Trails Conservancy (RTC). The Macomb Orchard Trail is RTC’s Trail of the Month for July, and is being promoted to RTC’s more than 700,000 news followers through a profile article at its website, www.railstotrails.org.

“The rail-trail is pure rural Americana, a paved ribbon winding through rolling farm fields, vivid green tree canopies and friendly Midwestern towns,” writes the article’s author, RTC writer Laura Stark.

As she examines the story behind the trail and its local popularity, Stark interviews many of the key figures in the trails’ development, including Macomb County Commissioner Don Brown, Shelby Township Parks and Recreation Director Joe Youngblood, and U.S. Rep. Candice Miller (R-MI).

“People are discovering their county like they never have before,” Brown says in the article. “From the trail, you get a different perspective of the county than you would from a car. You see farms and open space and wooded areas. The trail passes through all of that. You really see where you’re living.”
The story also highlights the economic impact the trail has had, increasing activity in local businesses.

“We don’t have the data points yet,” says Rick Statthakis, Supervisor for Shelby Township. “But we’re certain of the economic benefit of the trail. For example, there’s a Dairy Queen next to the trail and there will be 30 to 40 bikes packed in front. No question about it, the trail brings business.”

RTC selects its Trail of the Month honorees based not only on their appeal to trail users, but also the level of local support, connections to local main streets and businesses, and integration into a broader trail network.

The RTC feature makes special note of the local effort to develop a 70-mile trail loop around the county, which would link Stony Creek Metropark with the beaches of Lake St. Clair and several other parks.

In the article, Youngblood recalls walking the old railroad bed with his friends as a teenager. “Now, I see the trail and it brings back memories. It shows how a community can come together to take something not being used and turn it into a beautiful pathway.”

To read the full story, and to learn more about RTC, visit www.railstotrails.org

Rails-to-Trails Conservancy, a nonprofit organization with more than 100,000 members, is the nation’s largest trails organization dedicated to connecting people and communities by creating a nationwide network of public trails, many from former rail lines and connecting corridors. Founded in 1986, Rails-to-Trails Conservancy's national office is located in Washington, D.C., with regional offices in California, Florida, Ohio and Pennsylvania. For more information visit www.railstotrails.org.