



It is good to have an end to journey toward; but it is the journey that matters, in the end.

- Ernest Hemingway

Annual Report



2012 - 2013

Get Outside. Get Healthy. Hike.

Hike Ontario

Annual Report 2012-2013

www.hikeontario.com

Trails provide meaningful and satisfying outdoor experiences for many users. These experiences reaffirm a sense of connection with the natural environment and provide opportunities for an appreciation of Ontario's natural heritage. With a trails system that traverses many of Ontario's natural regions, trails play an important role in supporting environmental education and building a public commitment to environmental conservation.

Active2010: Ontario Trails Strategy, 2005

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HIKE ONTARIO GOVERNANCE

Throughout the years Hike Ontario has had one goal – to encourage walking, hiking and trail development in Ontario.

Established in 1974, Hike Ontario is a non-profit, charitable organization governed and operated by volunteers. We are the sole provider of province-wide hiking information and services. Hike Ontario is also unique amongst Canada's provinces and territories in many of the services it provides to this province's hiking associations and citizens. Eighty-five percent of Canadians walk for leisure and recreation. Thus, Hike Ontario acts as the voice for over 10 million hikers and walkers in Ontario.

Hike Ontario recognizes and supports trails throughout Ontario and appreciates that every trail is unique. Every trail can't be all things to all people but all trails can play beneficial roles. Trails play roles in the economy, play roles in the environment and perhaps most importantly, play roles in our health.

While Hike Ontario recognizes the diversity of trails and trail uses, our focus is on the representation and promotion of pedestrian based trails and their benefits, focusing specifically on connectivity, economics, education, environmental, health, heritage, recreation and transportation.

Hike Ontario does not make or maintain trails, nor does it offer organized hiking/walking events, except through its member associations. Hike Ontario is the umbrella organization that provides these province-wide associations with resources and services to build on these long-established local and regional initiatives in a way in which complements and enhances them.

Our Core Objectives:

- To encourage walking for recreation, transportation and health
- To encourage and facilitate trail development for walking and hiking throughout Ontario
- To encourage good trail maintenance and hiking practices and the enhancement and quality of the walking experience
- To encourage and facilitate the development of trail building hiking clubs in Ontario
- To act as an advocate for a club or clubs when requested or when an initiative is deemed necessary
- To encourage education and research into the health benefits and other aspects of recreational walking
- To encourage conservation and appreciation of the natural environment
- To maintain and disseminate information on hiking and hiking trails

Our Core Programs:

- Advocacy and Government Relations
- Ambassador Program
- Best Practices for Increasing Trail Usage by Hikers and Walkers
- Hike Leader Certification Program
- Insurance Provision and Risk Management
- Young Hikers Program
- Safe Hikers Program
- Long Distance Awards Program
- Annual Hike Ontario Summit
- Sponsor of Ontario Hiking Week
- Partnerships and Linkages

Program Descriptions

Advocacy and Government Relations: Hike Ontario is an active voice and resource to our government partners in the Ontario trails community. We play a lead role in promoting, educating about and advocating pedestrian trail experiences through an active presence at local, regional, provincial and national trail events. We do this through strategic planning processes, active communications, conference and workshop participation, information distribution, special events and educational campaigns.

Ambassador Program: Hike Ontario Ambassadors provide information on hiking and hiking trails across Ontario by promoting Hike Ontario and our member clubs to new and novice hikers across the province. As the number one source of province-wide information and resources about hiking, walking and pedestrian based trail development and management in Ontario, our Ambassadors provide this resource by doing presentations to clubs and community groups, training individuals and providing materials.

Best Practices for Increasing Trail Usage by Hikers and Walkers: Hike Ontario engaged in researching and collecting data on the strategies, methods and opportunities for increasing use of trails by walkers and hikers and was able to then publish a comprehensive manual of Best Practices. This manual is most useful for Hiking and Walking organizations, Parks and Recreation staff, Conservation Area & Parks staff, Municipalities and a broad range of Special Interest groups (Health Units, Resorts, private landowners, trail builders etc.)

Hike Leader Certification Program: Hike Ontario has developed standards and training programs for Hike Leaders that are used by our member clubs, community colleges, universities, activity clubs and outdoor training organizations for course delivery. Currently, Hike Ontario offers Certified Hike Leader, Wilderness Day Hike Leader, and Map & Compass certification courses.

Insurance Provision and Risk Management: Hike Ontario works diligently with its trail partners and insurance providers to provide the best possible policy conditions to suit the needs of its trail clubs. This in turn is working towards managing for safe and sustainable trails systems throughout Ontario for the pleasure of walkers and hikers. Hike Ontario plays a key role in risk management through our dedication to pursuing best practices, sound advice and proactively engaging in and encouraging safe practices and education.

Young Hikers Program: The Young Hikers Program aspires to introduce youth to the joys and benefits of hiking, through a variety of mediums such as Activity Resource Kit, Provincial Youth Advisory Committee, Youth Hike Leader Certification, Youth Risk Management Training and youth volunteer opportunities.

Safe Hikers Program: This one day course introduces the new or novice hiker to the joys and benefits of hiking, walking and the trails of Ontario. Special focus is placed on safety, sustainability and enjoyment. Upon completion, participants are armed with the knowledge necessary to keep themselves safe while hiking; how to ensure their hikes are environmentally and socially sustainable and will help them develop the confidence necessary to join hiking groups and/or go on their own hikes.

Long Distance Awards Program: Hike Ontario has a mandate to encourage hiking for all ages and all athletic levels throughout Ontario. The Long Distance Hiker Awards celebrate dedicated hikers who have logged long distances on multiple Ontario trails. Hike Ontario offers three long distance hiking awards; the Red Pine Award for 550 kms, the Trillium Award for 950 kms and the Tamarack Award for 1500 kms.

Annual Hike Ontario Summit: Held annually in October, our Summit is a weekend long event that features timely workshops, presentations, award presentations, guest speakers, and a full schedule of invigorating hikes.

Sponsor of Ontario Hiking Week: Every year from October 1-7, Hike Ontario sponsors Ontario Hiking Week, encouraging people of all ages to get out and hike the many trails of this beautiful province. Ontario Hiking Week demonstrates the many faces of hiking and walking - as a recreational activity that's low impact, affordable to all, and promotes environmental sustainability and ecological awareness.

Partnerships and Linkages: Hike Ontario has formed and sustains strong ties with both government and nongovernmental partners related to pedestrian trails. We strive to represent the interests of all hikers and walkers, trail clubs and all pedestrian based trail interests throughout Ontario. Hike Ontario represents the interests of hikers and walkers on the Ontario Trails Council (OTC) Board of Directors and the through a nominated representative to the Hike Canada En Marche Board of Directors.

Mission

To encourage walking, hiking and trail development in Ontario.

Vision

Hike Ontario seeks to maintain and develop its unique position as the number one source of province-wide information and resources about hiking, walking and pedestrian based trail development and management in Ontario.

Governance Structure

Hike Ontario is governed by a board of directors that meets four times per year at various locations across Ontario. Our board consists of approx. 35 people.

80% of the board members are appointed to represent their member club (i.e. the Bruce Trail) with the remaining members being elected at our Annual General Meetings.

The executive committee of the board additionally meets once a month. The executive consists of President, Vice President, Past President, Treasurer and Secretary. Additionally, the Chairs of each standing committee hold a position on the executive committee.

Executive Committee 2012 -2013

Tom Friesen	President
VACANT	Vice President
Jackie Aubé	Treasurer
Stacey Hodder	Secretary
Frieda Baldwin	Ontario Trails Council Representative
Brendan Zamojc	Hike Canada Representative

Standing Committees 2012-2013

Luis Costa	Certification Committee
Daniela Jameson	Public Education Committee
Zoriana Priadka	Issues, Policy & Advocacy Committee
Sojin Lee	Fund Raising Committee
Brendan Zamojc	Planning and Development Committee

Board Members – as appointed by our Member Clubs

Karen Hill	Avon Trail
Ken Magee	Bayfield River Valley Trail
Ron Knight	Bighead River Heritage Association (Trout Hollow Trail)
Robert Humphreys	Bruce Trail Association
Deborah Corbett	Durham Outdoors Club
Bill Clifford	Elgin Hiking Trail Club
Raymond Soucy	Elora Cataract Trailway Association
Bill Gray	Friends of the Trail Inc (Quinte)
Jeremy Bonnar	Ganaraska Hiking Trail Association
Laura Peddie	Georgian Bay Coast Trail
Charles Whitlock	Grand Valley Trails Association
Mike Curtis	Guelph Hiking Trail Club
Roland Gatti	Humber Valley Heritage Trail Association
Hellen Mills	Lost River Walks, North Toronto Green Community
Bruce Lamb	Lucan Area Trails Association
Ethel-Mae Seaman	Maitland Trail Association
Frieda Baldwin	North Simcoe Rail Trail
Peter Schaefer	Oak Ridges Trail Association
Barbara Burrows	Palmerston Trail Association Inc
Robert Groves/Dorothy Hudson	Rideau Trail Association
Diana Smyth	Rouge Park Trail Club
Leanne Dunne	Simcoe County Trails
Mike Erison	South Common B T Hikers Club
Ruth Hoch	Thames Valley Trail Association
Boris Modrian	Thunder Bay Hiking Association
Carole Blaquiere	Voyageur Trail Association
Raymond Ramshaw	Waterloo 55+ Seniors' Hiking Club

COMPASS 2015

Hike Ontario is the province's most valuable support resource for hiking and walking groups and users.

Strategic Themes

The strategic plan outlines the strategic goals and objectives that will guide Hike Ontario from 2010 to 2015 and prioritizes them as follows:

1. Build a sustainable organization
2. Promote hiking and walking, and pedestrian trails
3. a. Create value for members and non-members alike
b. Develop and deliver programs for all stakeholders
4. Develop an effective organization and systems.

Products and Services

Hike Ontario offers the following products and services:

Hike leader certification* Advocacy

Insurance program* Annual summit

Risk management program* Best practices report

Safe hiking program* Long distance awards

Website* Young hikers program

**Services identified as most important to member associations and clubs*

Goals and Objectives

Compass 2015 goals and objectives are two-tiered:

- i) Achieve short to medium-term goals related to strategic theme No. 1 between 2010 and 2012 (prepares for issues 2, 3a, 3b and 4.
- ii) Develop a road map that addresses all of the strategic themes and provides guidance on where Hike Ontario will be in 2015 and how it will get there.

Strategy and Action Plan

Short-term strategy and goals:

1. BUILD A SUSTAINABLE ORGANIZATION

Short-term goals:

- Get paid staff
 - Define a job description for the paid staff person
 - Estimate hours and funding requirements
- Focus on improving the delivery of priority services

- Concerted and planned rollout of services
- Improve volunteer development and recognition activities
 - Develop a volunteer manual
 - Develop volunteer-recognition policies
 - Enhance recognition activities.

Long-term strategies and goals:

2. PROMOTE HIKING AND WALKING AND PEDESTRIAN TRAILS

3A. CREATE VALUE FOR MEMBERS AND NON-MEMBERS ALIKE

B. DEVELOP AND DELIVER PROGRAMS FOR ALL STAKEHOLDERS

**4. DEVELOP EFFECTIVE ORGANIZATION AND SYSTEMS.
EXPERIENCE IT...ONE STEP AT A TIME...**



PRESIDENT'S REPORT

Submitted by Tom Friesen

This has been a dynamic and active year for Hike Ontario. Hiring an office manager with effective technical and organizational skills has broadened our presence with our member clubs, the public and other organizations serving the hiking community. Our website has been constantly updated and social media outreach has been added.

A major goal of creating this position was the creation of an Administration (Turn Key) Manual which was delivered by David Rosenblun-Bourdieu on time for the June 1st target date.

Our Treasurer, Godwin Abaahom needed to move west for steady employment so we were very grateful for Jackie Aube's experience and efforts who has served as our treasurer pro tem following the May 25 board meeting.

I was delighted to have chairs for all of our committees and noted increased activity particularly in Public Education and Fundraising as you will see from the reports from these committees.

I have acted as the Hike Ontario representative on the Summit/40th Anniversary of the Thames Valley Trail Anniversary Celebration to be held in London from October 18 to 20. Numerous meetings and hundreds of hours of work by dozens of volunteers are culminating in three days of celebration, information and hikes in London. The topics of the Summit are as follows: The Carolinian Zone, a Virtual Hike across the Province, Nature Photography, Adventure Hiking, Geocaching, Board management issues, Landowner Relations, Trail Maintenance, Hike Leadership, Using the Web and Social Media and Developing Partnerships in Trail Management.

I have used Volunteer MBC to recruit volunteers and then orient them in conjunction with Renata Bellio, our volunteer coordinator. This work continues but office mail is being directed by our volunteer Nafeesah Ali, and Jake Reynolds is acting as our Ambassador at the opening of the Friendship Trail on the Iroquoia Section of the Bruce Trail.

I established an Executive Search Committee with Mike Curtis and Raymond Soucy as members. Numerous approaches have been made to find qualified activists to serve on the 2013 – 2014 HO board as Vice President and Committee chairs. A slate of executive members has been proposed for consideration at the Annual meetings

I have acted as the Hike Ontario Mood Walks project liaison and am excited for the opportunity it provides to expand our programs and add instructors. I am pleased that the project coordinator, Andrea Town, has agreed to sit on our Certification Committee.

I have been in contact with a number of clubs and board representatives about Insurance Payments and questions, 2013 memberships in Hike Ontario, trainings as Safe Hiker instructors, CHL leaders and instructors, risk management documents, organizations with parallel goals, etc.

STANDING COMMITTEE REPORTS

Certification Committee

Submitted by Luis Costa and Tom Friesen

The Certification committee has made progress in a number of areas this year. The Certification Admin Manual was updated with an emphasis on uniform processes and procedures. Meetings were held with Jackie Aube, HO treasurer, to determine procedures for course tracking and invoicing. They agreed to work through our office manager to register, track participants and invoice for courses.

An instructor resource section was created for the website. It is password protected but contains student and instructor manuals, Power point presentations and other materials as well as posters for advertising courses.

Efforts were made to understand true profit / loss numbers, and hence the financial viability of our courses under our current delivery model, by tracking revenue and expenses for (some) courses as well as the time spent by our Office Manager on administration of the courses. Not enough data was collected to reach any conclusions.

The list of active Hike Ontario instructors was updated and notifications were sent to those on the list requesting payment of their annual \$25 fee. Most active instructors have paid their fee. A new Certified Hike Leader Course manual has been developed. Thanks are due to Ruth Oswald, the Rideau Trail Association, Tom Friesen and Luis Costa. Feedback has been solicited from Certification members. Following adjustment of the recommended changes (mostly waiver form formatting), it will be posted on the website. This manual was used recently in trainings in Waterloo and Perth with generally very positive feedback from course participants and instructors.

CHL courses were held throughout the Province, instructed by Lewis Williams, Luis Costa, Sue Simons, Mike Landmark, Diana Smyth, Rick Whittaker and Tom Friesen. Wayne Terryberry will also be instructing a CHL course later this year.

New CHL instructors have been trained and added to the certification committee as follows: Sue Simmons, Charles Whitlock (GVTA), Karen Hill (Avon) and Margaret LaFrance (RTA Central Club).

Safe Hiker courses for the public have been taught this year by Ruth Oswald and Ron Hunt in Ottawa, Diana Smyth and David Rosenblun-Bourdieu in Toronto, and Tom Friesen in Mississauga. The issue of people registering on line but not showing up to take the course exists. The solution sought is to prepay for courses (unless offered under a club auspices).

Courses for Safe Hiker for students were offered in schools in Toronto, Cobourg, Cambridge, Ottawa and London. Some of the courses were also opportunities to train teachers as Safe Hiker instructors at the same time.

Five secondary school teachers qualified as Safe Hiker instructors were asked about their intentions to teach and therefore pay their \$25 fee in 2013. Three responded (two yes, one no) and two more have to be pursued for an answer. Other teachers at schools and community colleges have inquired and we expect expanded activity in this area in 2013.

A Wilderness Overnight Hike Leader Course has been set up for Barrie for October 15, 19 & 20 as a pilot project.

There were no Wilderness Day Hike Leader or Map, Compass & GPS courses run this year.

Andrea Town has been hired as Project Manager for the “Mood Walks” successful CHMA grant from the Sport and Recreation Communities Fund. The project in addition to creating coordination in 30 communities for Mental Health clients will train instructors and teach 300 clients using the Safe Hiker program. Deanna Rando and James Kowaleski have agreed to assist in this training. Andrea has been offered a place on the certification committee for the next year.

Issues, Policy and Advocacy Committee

Submitted by Tom Friesen

The issues that have arisen this year in the province are as follows:

- Board recruitment and succession planning
- Encouraging a new generation of hikers
- The new Superhighway planned for north of Toronto
- The need for safety signage on roadways where hiking trails are passing
- Landowner relations
- Encouraging trained hike leaders to offer hikes for their associations
- Garbage left on or near hiking trails.

If you would like to work on these or other issues affecting hiking across Ontario, please consider signing up for this committee by sending a message to info@hikeontario.com.

Fundraising Committee

Submitted by Tom Friesen

The Fundraising Committee has been one of the most exciting places to be in Hike Ontario in the year.

We applied for a fall grant from MEC to train Safe Hikers but were not one of the 12 out of 96 successful applicants. MEC did give us a grant to supply three \$50 gift certificates as door prizes.

We were also successful in obtaining a training grant from TD Friends of the Environment.

We made a grant application to the Ministry of Sport and Recreation's Communities Fund for the Seniors Hike Initiative. We were a supporting partner in a similar grant from CMHA for their Mood Walks Grant which was modelled on our grant application.

We were disappointed that our grant which proposed training about nine hundred 55+ individuals as Safe Hikers and close to one hundred new hike leaders for just over \$100,000 was turned down.

However, we learned a considerable amount from examining the successful Mood Walks grant which was professionally written and will train 300 CHMA clients as Safe Hikers and 30 Certified Hike Leaders. Our representative partnered with staff from CHMA and a representative from Conservation Ontario in the interview process which selected from 6 outstanding candidates for the project manager. Andrea Town has been selected and attended a board meeting to familiarize us with her as well as to learn about our trail associations and hiking clubs.

This grant should build capacity for Hike Ontario Safe Hiker Instructors and other courses, provide models we can use in developing other grant proposals for other populations (Seniors, New Canadians, Aboriginals, Youth at Risk, etc.) and create a partnership with Conservation Ontario which could also extend our Safe Hiker and Certified Hike Leader trainings.

We also applied for Grants from TD Friends of the Environment in two areas: the Young Hiker program and support for construction of signs in Woolwich Township.

We recently learned that the various committees accepted our proposal to support the cost of 75% of the printing costs of the Young Hiker Manual for the a total of 400 manuals which will be offered to 8 school boards in Ottawa, Halton, Hamilton, Mississauga, Toronto Windsor, London, Kitchener and Waterloo.

The grant proposal which asked for close to \$4000 to help pay for information and cautionary signage on roads used by Trail Associations was unsuccessful.

We have also oriented volunteers with a marketing background who are willing to promote Hike Ontario through fundraising initiatives.

Public Education Committee

Submitted by Daniela Jameson B.A(Hons), M.Ed, OCT / Tom Friesen

The Hike Ontario group are committed to keeping the Public Education Committee thriving by collectively working diligently to promote hiking across the province. One way to keep active and spread awareness in the public sphere is through our website. In the past year we have made essential changes and updates to our website to reflect our message in a concise and consistent manner.

This year, our office administrator worked diligently on our social media campaign in where he created and maintained a blog, uploaded some videos on YouTube, tweeted new courses and events across the province and posted fabulous pictures on our Facebook page. It has also been continuously updated with links to recent Hiking Festivals, initiatives from the Carolinian Canada Coalition, Ontario Hiking Week, Spring Hike Day, International Hiking Day, plus resources for our Safe Hiker and Certified Hiker leader instructors.

Our goal has remained consistent. We wish to reach out and encourage our youth to join the hike with us. We will continue our social media campaign with the target of reaching out to new groups of people and other groups who share the same spirit and joy for the outdoors.

David Rosenblun-Bourdieu has provided us with a road map for a website revamp that the board recently approved.

An equally imperative goal has been to reach out to schools and promote nature awareness and hiking as we struggle with increasing numbers of Nature Deficit Disorders amongst our school children. We plan to expand and reach out to promote our Young Hikers Program throughout schools across the province. The Public Education Committee has had several meetings through the past year as well as been active in coordinating many of the activities under its mandate.

Our Annual Summit is an opportunity for hikers to gather, celebrate and learn about aspects of hiking, trail management and other outdoor pursuits. This year's Summit "Meet Me at the Thames" held from October 18 to 20 in London, Ontario in Conjunction with the Thames Valley Trail on the occasion of their 40th Anniversary. Topics of interest will be the Carolinian Zone, a Virtual Hike across the Province, Nature Photography, Adventure Hiking, Geocaching, Board management issues, Landowner Relations, Trail Maintenance, Hike Leadership, Using the Web and Social Media and Developing Partnerships in Trail Management. "Meet Me by the Thames" was created as a chance to promote the events.

We are delighted to hear that grants we made to the T.D. Friends of the Environment to pay for 75% of the printing costs of the Young Hikers Resource Manual, were successful all for 8 communities we applied for. We are currently working to roll out this program which will help teachers to engage their students in outdoor activities to reverse Nature Deficit Disorder.

Three Volunteer of the Year Awards will be presented at the celebratory dinner for the Thames Valley Trail's 40th Anniversary.

Ambassadors for Hike Ontario are being recruited and trained through the volunteer director.

"Best Practices to Encourage Trail Usage by Hikers and Walkers" was distributed to Health Units in some areas.

Ontario Hiking Week took place from October 1st to 7th with several trail associations offering "Open Hikes" and promotions made on the Hike Ontario website and through press releases.

We see great potential in Social Media for Hike Ontario and we welcome your comments, suggestions and ideas for engaging and raising awareness of Hike Ontario and its vital role in our province and throughout Canada.

We invite you to follow us on Twitter, Facebook, YouTube and our Blog

<http://hikeontarioblog.wordpress.com>

<youtube.com/takeahikeontario>

<facebook.com/hikeontario>

<twitter.com/hikeontario>

Certification
Hike Ontario 2013
Green Adventure
Social Media Outreach Project
Public Education
Twitter Facebook
Hikes Vision

Planning and Development Committee

Submitted by Brendan Zamojc

Over the past year the Planning & Development committee has been active in a number of areas. The most important of which is securing and maintaining the Hike Ontario Insurance Program. This program offers insurance to clubs at rates that are fair and affordable, while providing adequate insurance to satisfy both our own needs as well as those of partner organizations and land owners. This year, Hike Ontario introduced an additional fee of \$50 to the insurance program to help augment the costs of having Hike Ontario's office administrator involved in day to day insurance requests. This fee was established based upon estimations of billable hours directly resulting from the insurance program maintenance. So far, this has proven beneficial to Hike Ontario and the clubs that participate in the insurance program. Turnaround times for certificates of insurance have dropped significantly as a direct result of this implementation. Hike Ontario will be revising the insurance situation in the months leading up to renewal on May 1st 2014. Hike Ontario offers two types of insurance to its member clubs.

They are Commercial General Liability (CGL) and Directors & Officers (D&O). CGL insurance is intended to protect the hiking club or trail association from liabilities resulting from regular hiking and maintenance activities as well as low occurrence non-hiking activities. D&O insurance is intended to protect the Officers of a hiking club or trail association, in the event that legal action is launched against them as the result of decisions made while in office. This type of insurance is important, because the legal action can be taken regardless of when the Officers were in active office. If you have any questions or would like to participate in Hike Ontario's insurance program, please email plandev@hikeontario.com.

The Planning & Development committee was also involved in a project to offer electronic trail guides in order to reach a younger generation of hikers. Work was made towards moving forward with this project in defining grant criteria; however, the project is currently on hold indefinitely due to new priority initiatives.

The chair of P&D was present and privy to the landowner relation actions that various clubs engaged in over the past year. It has become apparent that landowner relations is something that Hike Ontario, as the provincial association, should have a structured landowner relations program in place to handle the situations that arise from time to time. For this reason, over the next year, expect to see work being done in creating "Best Practices" for landowner relations as part of a new Hike Ontario Landowner Relations Program. Included in this new program will be resources for trail operating clubs and associations to forge new relationships with landowners in order to open new trails and side trails.

Hike Ontario has been working diligently to improve risk management efforts across the province. Beginning with Hike Ontario's risk management guide, we have begun to make requests from clubs and associations regarding their risk management procedures and processes. This is done in an effort to ensure that our trails are as safe as they can possibly be. As we move forward, Hike Ontario will be introducing a Risk Management Program in an effort to offer more resources to clubs in two situations. The first situation is proactive risk management. Proactive risk management includes the steps taken to make our trails as safe as possible without interfering with the activity of hiking itself. This type of risk management should already be in policy and practice across the province. New information and the maintenance of club risk management will be assured through accessibility to up to date information on industry standards through Hike Ontario's web page. The second situation is reactive risk management. This type of risk management is meant to be in place to react in the event that an incident on your trail or during a hike develops. Readiness plans will be a significant part of the new Risk Management Program. This program will be offered to every member club or association in an effort to ensure that all of the trails and activities that Hike Ontario endorses are as safe as they can be and are ready in all potential events.

HIKE ONTARIO MEMBER CLUB REPORTS

Hike Ontario's member clubs and associations fall into three categories:

Hiking Clubs: are predominantly urban and offer organized events and excursions to member trails, rail trails, Conservation Authority, Ontario Parks or municipal trails. Membership varies but can be quite large.

Trail Building Clubs: are associations who build and maintain recreational hiking trails in various parts of the province. They provide the full range of trail management services, including trail development, maps and guidebooks, maintenance, landowner relations, events, membership and newsletters, as well as promotion and publicity for their particular trails. There are approximately 3500 km of such trails in the province

Affiliate Members: are corporations, government agencies and organizations other than non-profit hiking or trail building organizations (commercial or non-profit) that support our mission, vision and values.

Avon Trail

Submitted by Karen Hill

This has been a good year for the Avon Trail. We look after a length of trail just short of 100 kms from the Town of St Marys to the Village of Conestoga. We hike and do Maintenance along Trout Creek, The Avon River, Silver Creek, the Nith River, and along the Conestoga River. We see wonderful forests, bush lots, and cropped land looked after by Stewarts of the Lands – our Landowners. We have met many of the landowners over the years. We continue to be very appreciative of the opportunity to visit their properties.

Lots of rain this spring brought many opportunities for maintenance and for the camaraderie that this brings to our Trail Monitors and Maintenance crew members. Rain mid summer brought an unusual amount of growth and the weather forecasts are showing more rain on the way for the Fall. A salute to those that head out to keep the grass under control, and the branches trimmed back.

Hikes were held along the Avon Trail, the Thames, the Grand and a few of us were on the Camino del Maitland. Our thanks go to all those that lead hikes – and bring us to spots that remind us of the quiet, and of the miracle of Nature. Our Board members continue to be our back bone, proving guidance to the work of the Trail. There need not be any Nature Deficient Disorder as long as our volunteers carry on their great work.

Our special project this year, has been the development of a board walk through a mature Cedar Bush just north east of Stratford, where our volunteers have designed and installed a walk way for hikers to enjoy a quiet time in a unique setting.

We appreciate the efforts of Hike Ontario including President Tom, as the Board continues, to be the Voice of Hikers and Walkers in our Province so that others see the Nature Beauty of Ontario in a continuous network of Trails. We receive far more than we give whenever we visit a trail. Happy Hiking.

Bayfield River Valley Trail

Submitted by Ken Magee

For the record, we have 37 paid up memberships, most of which are families.

The Trail Association had a busy spring and summer, much of our efforts involving our Mobility Trail. We did a lot of preparatory work on a 1 km section on a nature trail, preparing the trail by applying a special base of stones, then applying a coat of crushed asphalt. We used a small tractor with a bucket to dump the asphalt then it was hand-raked onto the trail surface. This final coat took a nine hour day to spread and rake by a party of 15 to 20 volunteers. The trail is now open to the public for wheelchairs and strollers.

New signs on another trail contain descriptions of the local habitats and their relations to water, developed with help from the local conservation authority. Each sign also has a QR code to link it to the new trail website (www.bayfieldtrailsandwaters.ca). As the web site is further developed interested walkers will be able to use the QR codes to get even more information about the local flora, fauna and water courses.

Work parties cleared several sections of the trails after wind damage and trees fallen over the trails. We are trying to manage the dead ash trees along the trails.

In September we released a new guide book "Bayfield Trails and Waters", stressing the need to clean up the streams and rivers before we can clean up the lakes. Early in September we helped sponsor another successful Terry Fox Run using our trails. We have also sponsored the tree committee in their endeavours to replenish the tree population of Bayfield.

At the end of September we sponsored a Water, Art & Fitness Festival. It involved urban (and trail) pole walking, a fitness run, and combined art show and silent auction. The featured speaker on Saturday evening was author and environmental advocate Maude Barlow. She spoke to a sold-out audience about improving the water quality of the Great Lakes. Her message was very well received. Proceeds from the day's activities went to a local hospital in Goderich.

Bighead River Heritage Association (Trout Hollow Trail)

Submitted by Ron Knight

Our trail goes about 7km up the Bighead River from Meaford and returns on the other side of the river. Lately we have added wooden walkways around muddy areas, cleaned up after bush parties, re-routed after the Spring flooding, fenced off ATV traffic, cleared away fallen trees. In other words, the usual work of hardworking trail volunteers everywhere. We also see the

evidence of users cleaning up and making the trail better for all. Well-worn areas indicate the trail is often used. We had some of the Trout family from Texas take a very interesting walk to the ruins of the 1860's sawmill on the trail named after their family. Of course John Muir, who worked at the mill for a couple of years, was discussed and they went home to see what history they could find in family archives. We'll see! Thankfully we have had a good year, with many enjoying the trail in groups, families or the solitary hiker. Looking forward to next year.

For more information, go to www.bigheadriver.org

Bruce Trail Conservancy

Submitted by Robert Humphreys

The year, 2013, sees the second year of the Bruce Trail Conservancy's celebration of the 50th Anniversary of the Bruce Trail (This being because several key milestones were achieved during the period 1962 – 1967 including formation of clubs, incorporation etc). Our theme this year has been "Sharing the Trail", and the achievements of the year reflect the dedication of our members, volunteers, donors, and landowners to sharing the beauties of the Bruce Trail and the Niagara Escarpment.

During the 2013 fiscal year the BTC ran several membership campaigns to attract new members, with significant success. A total of 1,644 new members joined the BTC, although there were a significant number of lapsed members by year end. As of the end of August, 2013, our latest numbers by club are as follows.

Club	# Memberships
Niagara	579
Iroquoia	2149
Toronto	2795
Caledon Hills	830
Dufferin Hi-Land	328
Blue Mountains	383
Beaver Valley	525
Sydenham	372
Peninsula	629
Member-At-Large (No Club affiliation)	60
TOTAL	8650

Land acquisition and protection has continued, with ten properties totalling 562 acres (227 hectares) of land along the Bruce Trail's Conservation Corridor secured for preservation. This has been achieved by both the generosity of BTC members and donors. At the same time we recognize the generosity of more than 985 landowners who allow the Bruce Trail on their land, most with no more formality than a handshake.

In many respects this past year was the year of the side trail, with six Clubs completing 19 new or improved side trails and as a result sharing the beauty of the Niagara Escarpment. Two in particular are worthy of mention. First, the Gravelly Point Side Trail that has been put in by the

Peninsula Club, on the Malcolm Bluff Shores Property purchased in 2011. Secondly, the spectacular Splitrock Narrows Side Trail that the Dufferin Hi-Land Club has put in on land purchased in 2012. There is always somewhere new to walk on the Bruce Trail!

Durham Outdoors Club

Submitted by Deborah Corbett

Durham Outdoors Club (DOC) is a small non-profit member-driven organization, totally run by volunteers. The type, number and scope of activities are determined by the will of the members. The club sponsors and participates in various activities throughout the year, including, but not limited to: Nature hikes, urban/neighbourhood walks, snowshoeing, day canoe trips and weekend canoe/camping trips, cycling day trips, ski days and weekend ski trips, winter camping – indoor and outdoor.

DOC has an elected executive committee and a number of activity coordinators for the various events. A key strength of DOC is the variety of activities offered by the members, resulting in a broader appeal and relevance to outdoor enthusiasts. There are currently 112 members. DOC continues to face the challenge of maintaining and growing our membership, increasing the participation of members and getting more members to lead activities. We have recently expanded our membership to include families to increase membership and participation.

DOC activities for the first six months of 2013 are as follows:

- 22 hikes
- 11 weeknight evening walks (these are a non-winter activity)
- 4 urban events:
 - o Mini-putt
 - o Billiards
 - o Beach day and dinner
 - o Ice skating day
- 3 day canoe trips
- 5 canoe weekend trips
- 2 ski days
- 1 winter camping trip
- 9 bike rides
- 2 camping/biking/hiking weekends
- 2 executive committee meeting
- 6 general membership meetings

A Risk Management Plan has been approved by the executive and has been submitted to HO.

As quarterly stats are not available prior to January 1st of this year, DOC is unable to report for the full year (an annual report for calendar 2012 was provided to HO earlier this year.) Starting in 2014, we will start reporting on a July – June year to correspond to HO requirements.

Elgin Hiking Trail Club

Submitted by Bill Clifford

The Elgin Hiking Trail Club maintains a 41 Km trail from Port Stanley to Southdel Bourne where it connects to the Thames Valley Trail.

The trail has been temporary closed on Sunset Drive due to construction, more info is posted on the EHTC website below.

We occasionally have to close the trail from Southdale Road to John Wise Line due to the proximity of an eagle's nest. This may be an annual event. End to end hikers can take an alternative route on the roads of the west side of the Kettle Creek spillway valley.

We look forward to our Christmas party at the Beanery in St. Thomas on November 30 at 6:30 PM.

We have no end-to-enders to report.

We also look forward to the annual Candlelit Christmas Spirit Walk on Saturday, December 7, at Springwater. Tours begin at 6:00 p.m. and run until 8:00 p.m. It is a valuable partnership with Catfish Creek Conservation Authority which brings together over 30 volunteers from the club, plus performing groups to put the event on. It raises money for trail maintenance for both partners.

Visit our website at www.elginhikingtrailclub.org.

Elora Cataract Trailway Association

Submitted by Raymond Soucy

The Elora Cataract Trailway is a 47-km (29-mile) linear trail that links parks, watersheds and Communities in south-central Ontario. The trail is routed along the abandoned railway corridor of the 1879 Credit Valley Railway and runs from Elora to Cataract, passing through the Communities of Elora, Fergus, Belwood, Orton, Hillsburgh, Erin and Cataract.

The Elora Cataract Trailway Association (ECTA) focuses on Promoting, Improving and Protecting the Elora Cataract Trailway.

In the past year, the ECTA has worked to expand the “curb appeal” of the trailheads at Gerrie Road in Elora and Beatty Line in Fergus. The association has once again paid for a seasonal portable washroom at the Beatty Line Trailhead. There has been a greater emphasis on working with tourism groups within RTO4 to make the Elora Cataract Trailway an important asset within the regional tourism network.

We have installed a couple of trail counters to help gather more accurate data regarding the use of the trail. In the long run, the data will provide information on usage patterns on the trail such as, by season, month, days of the week etc. Properly understanding how the trail is being used is an important step in promoting and improving the Trailway.

Our two 8' x 2' banners continue to be placed at various points along the trail for a week or two at a time at each location. The banners provide the ECTA with exposure to trail users and help increase awareness and memberships.

The ECTA is now in the planning stages of our new five year plan. This plan will set out the major areas of focus for the association. Some of the successful initiatives from our previous plan include tree plantings, Hike the Trail Series, Project BOOT (Benches On Our Trailway) that placed fourteen commemorative benches on the Trailway. Continued trailhead improvements and advocacy with governments, government agencies and developers on behalf of the Trailway.

The 2013 AGM was held on Sunday March 24th at the Victoria Park Senior Centre in Fergus. Our Guest speaker this year was David Lamble – “The Master Bird Bander”. David provided a very lively and enthusiastic presentation of his bird banding work over the past 35 years. David has banded over 140,000 birds and in recent years taught 1,000 Grade 2 to University students about birds. He discussed how his work has helped to make some educated guesses about what changes can be made to improve habitat. It was followed by a lively Q&A. The attendance at the AGM was the highest we've had in several years.

A big challenge and focus going into 2013-14 remains renewal of our board of directors. The development of our new five year plan is an excellent opportunity for someone(s) to have their ideas incorporated into the plan to be carried out in the next five years. Anyone interested can email info@trailway.org for more details.

Friends of the Trail

Submitted by Bill Gray

This year started with the usual optimism and plans to finish the much desired southern connection and a hope that the summer would bring some new members to fill the vacant executive positions. As is the case when dealing with Mother Nature the best laid plans were temporarily set aside and our efforts were redirected to clean up after the Ice Storm and start work on the new Riverside loop.

A \$24,000 Grant From the Ministry of Environment enabled us to work with the City of Quinte West, Batawa Development Corporation, Lower Trent Conservation and several community volunteer organizations to enhance the shoreline along the Trent River and develop a recreational trail looped to the Lower Trent Trail. This project will be complete by the end of November.

The Trail was inspected from end to end with the surface found to be in good condition and suitable for handicap access. The grass banks were cut back with the Flail mower in early August and work groups then manually brushed sections that were showing the most vegetation encroachment. A problem with a blocked culvert was corrected with the removal of a beaver dam, the sound caused by the rush of released water has persuaded us to name the spot Beaver Falls.

The Wildflower Garden that was Sponsored by the Hastings Stewardship Council and Planted by the Batawa Development Corporation, and the residents of Batawa was completed in July The Garden is located at Perry drive on the Lower Trent Trail and provides an excellent entrance as you walk into this Green Community.

A large increase in Trail usage and the numerous favourable comments we have received, are proof that we are providing a positive impact on the community and we should be proud of what our group has accomplished.

Although we have received several new members the overall numbers remain stable at around 100. As always, collecting annual membership fees is a drawn out process and the number of paid up members always lags behind, this could be an age thing for although we all have good intentions it sometimes slips our mind.

We are still waiting the results from several initiatives we have in place to revisit the Sonoco issue and the development of the southern connection. This delay is affecting the submission of any major grant requests for next year.

Another good year in the Trail Business, it is nice to see some of the new Federal and Provincial Health and Welfare initiatives I think we have a very positive future.

Visit our website at www.friendsofthetrail.ca

Ganaraska Hiking Trail Association

Submitted by Jeremy Bonnar

Membership

Total membership of the nine clubs that make up the Ganaraska Hiking Trail Association (GHTA) is 555, which includes 49 life members, which consistent with previous years.

Activities

The GHTA holds Annual General Meetings on the 1st Saturday in November and Directors Meeting on the 3rd Saturday in April, at Regent United Church in Orillia.

The nine member clubs of the Association maintain the over 500 kilometre long Ganaraska Hiking Trail from Port Hope on Lake Ontario to the Bruce Trail near Collingwood, with side trails to Wasaga Beach and Midland. The GHTA is run by a Board of Volunteers drawn from the member clubs

The GHTA nine member clubs host numerous guided hikes throughout the year. Hikes are posted in our quarterly newsletter, as well as on our webpage (www.ganaraska-hiking-trail.ca).

Awards: GHTA End-to-end awards numbers 153 and 154 had been given to Rob and Anne Pope who had completed the trail over the past three years. The GHTA presented certificates and badges to Rob and Anne Pope.

Awards: The GHTA Excellence in Trail Management Award for 2012 was presented to the Midland Hiking Club They had done an excellent job preparing the trail for the OXFAM Trailwalker event and had contacted all 18 of their landowners to reaffirm agreements with them. In addition they revised the trail route through Midland.

Golden Parks Pass for Seniors: The GHTA is championing a petition to have a annual seniors pass to allow access to Federal and Provincial Parks. A similar program in the USA, allows seniors to purchase a \$10 pass which provides free admission to all federal parks.

Landowner Signs: The GHTA purchased several landowner signs which have been posted at the trail heads of our privately owned land. The signs identify that the Ganaraska Trail is traversing over privately owned land. They include the GHTA web-site address.

Risk Management: At the GHTA AGM, the GHTA incorporated our Risk Management Plan, which includes a comprehensive Crisis Management Protocol. In consort the GHTA has elected a new Risk Management Director who will deal with the management and administration of our Risk Management Implementation Plan.

Professional Development: The GHTA continues to offer Professional Development Training to our membership, including First Aid Training and Hike Ontario, Hike Leaders Courses (note: the GHTA offers a 1-year free membership to our members who take the Hike Leaders Course).

Guide Book: The GHTA has reprinted our Guide Book on a new water and tear resistant UV paper.

Challenges

Vacant Positions: Two executive member positions remain vacant in the GHTA. We are looking for volunteers to fill the duties as Trail Director and Landowners Relations. Anyone that is interested in helping out is encouraged to advise the executive.

Increased Costs: The GHTA is finding it increasingly difficult to operate within existing fiscal constraints. In particular, we are finding it increasingly difficult to offer same-price mailing charges to all addresses across Ontario, which in turn effects the mailing of membership renewals, guidebooks, newsletters and clothing. The GHTA is also finding it difficult to operate effectively with our numerous partnerships without suffering some fiscal stressors. As a result, the GHTA has increased our Annual Membership fees to \$25.00.

Georgian Bay Coast Trail

Submitted by Laura Peddie

At the end of the 2013 trail building season we will see approximately 27km of trail built by the Wikwemikong trail building crew at Point Grondine; a 7km day loop and a 20 km two day loop. Partnering with the Wikwemikong Development Commission (WDC), GBCT is in conversation with Parkbus to organize group hikes for a soft opening in the 2014 hiking season.

WDC's trail building crew has also been training crew members from Henvey Inlet First Nation who are currently out mapping and flagging 40km of trail at HIFN.

GBCT has developed a new logo and in progress of developing branding guidelines and away finding system to serve our Partners as an umbrella marketing group.

GBCT trail development is a long and costly process. In the near future we will be reaching out for volunteers to help Guard the trail. Currently, we have launched our Adopt a Metre program which allows supporters to adopt a portion of the trail, thus supporting GBCT's operational efforts. In addition to trail building activities, GBCT is also hoping to purchase Water Spyderys (www.waterspyders.com) to solve the trail's water crossing problem. By Adopting a Metre, making a donation of your choice, purchasing t-shirts or even just subscribing to our e-newsletter, you help ensure that the GBCT vision is realized.

Grand Valley Trails Association

Submitted by Charles Whitlock

"Honouring and strengthening the GVTA's trail system, programs and unique community while creating fresh opportunities for the next wave of hikers to get involved and enjoy the natural wonders of the Grand River Watershed"

The Grand Valley Trails Association is a volunteer organization committed to establishing footpaths within Ontario's Grand River Watershed in order to promote the protection and public enjoyment of the natural environment and human history of this Canadian Heritage River. The Grand Valley Trail is a 275-kilometer marked footpath starting at the mouth of the Grand River in Haldimand County and ends in the Town of Alton, near Orangeville. Our current membership is 235.

We were very proud to have hosted the 2012 Hike Ontario summit as well as the 40th anniversary of our association in our community. With 96 people that attended the HO Summit and 225 people registered for the evening dinner that featured Kevin Callan, we believe this to be a very successful event.

The board of directors wishing to maintain the post-40th momentum had a wide-ranging discussion on how to maintain its newer profile within the hiking community. A new three-year strategic plan, (2012-16) was developed based on the input of more than 70 members. The strategic plan named "THREE STRATEGIC TREKS" are as follows:

Trek 1: Board and organization

Improve organizational functioning, tighten structure of the board and improve communications between the board, volunteers and the membership at large.

Trek 2: Membership and marketing

Reach out to new and current members through an enhanced web and social media presence, community relations' initiatives, and tangible member benefits packages.

Trek 3: Programs and Trails

Create and promote hikes on the Grand Valley Trails tailored to attracting new members, and lay the ground work for future improvements to the trail and its touting.

In his endorsement of GVTA strategic plan, Mr. Nick Dinka, President GVTA identified that the plan is designed to serve as a brief, simple, and easy digested guide for the next three years, a set of blazes that will start us out on the right foot as we begin our fifth decade as an association.

On the behalf of the GVTA Board of Directors and its current 235 members, we extend our thanks to Hike Ontario for holding its annual summits. We also extend our congratulations to the Thames Valley Trails Association on its 40th anniversary.

Guelph Hiking Trail Club

Submitted by Mike Curtis

The Guelph Hiking Trail Club finished its financial year (Aug. 31) with 255 members, slightly higher than last year. In June, we celebrated the 40th anniversary of our Speed River Trail with a barbeque and brief addresses from local politicians and some of our "experienced" members. Short hikes along the trail were conducted and a good time was experienced by all attendees.

Once again, our children's hikes have proved very popular with usually over 50 children (accompanied by an adult) walking on interpretive hikes varying from two to four km, with snacks afterward.

Our new, revised guidebook was published this year and sales have been brisk, with members and the general public. It has revisions already as some road sections have been moved to fence lines and off road!

Our skating gatherings, summer picnic and winter gatherings have again proved very popular.

We were pleased to be part of the planning for the Trails and Tourism Forum which took place near Fergus in September. Over 80 participants attended to hear presentations from various

speakers including Velo Quebec, and the Waterfront Regeneration Trust. It was a very full day, including lunchtime activities outside in glorious fall weather.

Our new members' evening in October was well attended and we enjoyed an excellent presentation on methods to relieve muscular stress and strain during and after hiking.

We continue to enjoy excellent trail conditions due to our maintenance volunteers and have a full hiking schedule thanks to our many hike leaders.

We look forward to assisting with the development of the G to G (Guelph to Goderich or Goderich to Guelph) rail trail as an extension to the Kissing Bridge Trailway.

Humber Valley Heritage Trail Association

Submitted by Roland Gatti

Membership

The total membership of the Kleinburg and Caledon Chapters of the HVHTA currently is 94 member families. This is an increase of 15 members over last year. The upswing can be attributed to two actions: firstly, we now send out a yearly calendar which prompts members to renew, and we actively persuade non-member hiking participants of the benefits of membership in our association.

Planned Hikes

We plan one major hike every month with additional short hikes for specialized groups. We have partnered with the McMichael Art Gallery to lead 4 educational guided hikes along the Humber River to attract visitors to partake in more activities while visiting Kleinburg. We are looking to develop associations with school groups to explore our trail network in order to improve their "nature IQ".

Trails Maintenance

In August, 4 of our members spent an afternoon performing trail maintenance and an audit of our main trail loop. We were pleasantly surprised that the trail sections having tall grasses were less overgrown than previous years, indicating more hiking traffic along the trail. Unfortunately the torrential downpour we experienced July 8 washed away the earth and gravel on many sections of our trail. The gutted portions of the trail will be rebuilt by the Toronto Region Conservation Authority (TRCA).

Trails Development

The TRCA, which owns all the Humber River valley land, has developed a new plan together with our association to improve the existing trails along the river going north from Bolton to Palgrave. The result will be sustainable trails resisting the ravages of nature, and being safer for all trail users. Trail construction in the Bolton vicinity has begun already.

Currently three members of the Kleinburg Chapter are working closely with the TRCA to develop new trails within the Nashville Tract, being the lands within the Humber River valley from Bolton to Kleinburg. The trail plan should be complete by spring of 2014 and will include new scenic and challenging hiking trails from Kleinburg to Bolton, as well as cycling and equestrian trails. Construction of the new trails will be scheduled to begin late 2014 and anticipated to take one year to complete.

Environmental Concerns

The new east-west highway (#413) is being planned to connect Highway 400 to the Niagara area passing right through the Humber RiverValley putting all native flora and fauna at risk including some endangered species. We are resisting the approval of this route in the hope that it can be rerouted through less sensitive areas.

Lost River Walks, Toronto Green Community

Submitted by Helen Mills

Lost Rivers coordinates guided walks that tell the fascinating story of Toronto's past and present landscapes, people, buried creeks and neighbourhoods. Since 1995 over 20,000 people have participated in Lost River Walks.

Lost Rivers is a program of the Toronto Green Community in partnership with Toronto Field Naturalists and many others including Hike Ontario, Evergreen, Riversides, Human River, TRCA Don Council, LEAF, Humber Heritage, Youth for Water, Thorncliffe Park Women's Committee, Afghan Women's Committee, Highland Creek Community Stewardship Program, Park People, East Toronto Storefront, David Suzuki Homegrown National Park, Vanishing Point, Jane's Walks,

Walks, October 1 2012 to September 30 2013:

Number of walks – 36

Total number of attendees – 2289

Average attendance - 62

Number of Walk Leaders – 33

Number of special walks – 8

Number of schools involved in the walks – 1 (4 school events cancelled due to work to rule during negotiations)

Big Events:

"Lost Rivers" documentary screenings:

October 2012, Planet in Focus Film Festival (Helen, Georgia, Michael on panel)

March 2013 Bloor Hot Docs (Helen on panel)

June 18, 2013 Beach Business Hub (Helen on panel)

June 26, 2013 Outdoor Screening at Old Fort York with David Suzuki Homegrown National Park

David Suzuki Homegrown National Park 2013: Launch March, Jane's Walk May, Finale September

Workshops and Presentation - 6

Teacher's PD Day TRCA Kortright Centre (Helen and John)

Agincourt Garden Club (Helen)

Riverdale Historical Association (Helen and John)

East York Historical Association (John)

Lost Rivers Summit (John)

Beach Business Hub (Helen)

Lost Rivers Media:

Now Magazine, CBC Metro Morning, Metro, Toronto Star, Global TV

In Development:

New Field Guides: Unearthing Garrison Creek and E T Seton Park with Thorncliffe Park Women's Committee. New website! At Last!

Websites:

www.lostrivers.ca:

Developed and launched in 2002 by Peter Hare, the Lost Rivers Website is a virtual tour of the lost rivers which form the main matrix of buried creeks between the Don and Humber Rivers. On this site you can find detailed maps of Burke Brook, Mud Creek, Yellow Creek, Castle Frank Brook, Walmsley Brook, Cudmore Creek, Taddle Creek, Russell Creek, Garrison Creek, the Market Creeks, and the Lower Don along with links that tell the story of the geological and human history of each creek and its watershed.

www.thirstycitywalks.ca:

Self guided walking tours that can be downloaded and printed

People:**Lost River Committee:**

Helen Mills, John Wilson, Emily Alfred, Justyna Braithwaite, Richard Anderson, Georgia Ydreos, Ian Wheal, Paula Messina, Wai Yee Chou, Madeleine McDowell, Lacey Williams, Olivia McGuire, John Ballantine, Abe Dyckstra

Volunteer Opportunities:

Lost Rivers is looking for enthusiastic volunteers with energy and ideas:

Responsibilities can include all or some of the tasks below:

- Developing and leading walks
- Maintaining and updating the website
- Website development, and fundraising for this project
- Help with publicity (writing emails, events listings, press releases, articles, distributing flyers, contacting community groups, maintaining lists, hosting a table for an event, creating a listserve)
- Help during walks- eg- welcome participants, help with getting walkers signed up, feedback forms
- Research and mapping of lost watersheds for development of walks and website content
- Depending on interest other tasks/responsibilities may also be created
- Attending meetings and possibly keeping minutes, with the Lost Rivers committee

Work will take place at various locations. Work will occur on weekdays. Some weekend and evening work might be required.

Application Process:

Please email a resume and covering letter outlining your interest in this position to Paula Messina: paula@torontogreen.ca

Lucan Area Trails Association

Submitted by Bruce Lamb

Trail Inventory - Start of 2013

We currently have a total of 2 km of trails in addition to approximately 3 km of trails previously in existence and maintained by a private landowner.

Financial

The initial funding for this project was provided by the Lucan District Lions Club and we know that they are supportive of the initiative.

We still have approximately \$5,900 of the initial \$10,000 donated by the Lions in the bank. The Lions have committed an additional \$10,000 towards trail building and improvements -- with the potential for more if justification exists.

Activities for 2013

The key challenge for 2012 was in ongoing maintenance of the trails. As such, a contractor has been hired to cut the grass along the trails and do minor maintenance of the trails. The trails have been well maintained this year.

We initiated a "geocaching" activity on our trails with someone who is familiar with the process.

We plan to improve the signage along the existing trails.

We plan to do Facebook marketing to people in the Lucan area to get more people using the local trails.

In October and November, we plan to identify a trail building project and hire a landscape contractor to define the trail.

Maitland Trail Association

Submitted by Ethel-Mae Seaman

CURRENT CHALLENGES

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING/MEMBERSHIP RENEWAL

The Maitland Trail Association (MTA) Annual General Meeting date has been changed from November to early April (either the 10th or the 17th) in order to better facilitate having the year-end financial report closed and audited and presented at the AGM.

A separate travel talk and membership renewal meeting will be held in November to accommodate renewals for those who are used to renewing at the previous AGM time in November.

Also, the new upgraded website is nearly ready and will go live in September barring any difficulties. Members will be able to renew memberships on line using Pay Pal. It may take some time to encourage this switch.

TRAIL RANGERS AND TRAIL MAINTENANCE

Barb and Cole Currie the Trail Ranger Coordinators are passing trail ranger reports to work crews where needed work is indicated. Spring inspections were completed in May. Needless to say, there is still a need to replant and beautify sections of our trail devastated by the Tornado. 'Trees Beyond Goderich' sponsored a tree planting event on October 5th to continue this process by replanting 600 plus trees in the area.

RISK MANAGEMENT REPORT

Our Risk Management Report is in Good Shape and is being updated regularly.

MEMBERSHIP

Membership is currently 160 and expected to be close to 170 before the membership renewal meeting in November. Although our numbers are holding steady, there is also a steady turnover of new members.

There are currently 16 registered hike leaders in the MTA and two more who are interested. Wendy Hoernig is currently the only Hike Leader Instructor in the club.

RECENT ACTIVITIES AND SUCCESSES

The Maitland Trail's first El Camino del Rio Maitland was held on the week-end of June 22 and 23rd. Thanks to the many, many volunteers this event was highly successful. Hopefully it will become an annual event.

The second Annual Thirsty Games Scavenger Hunt held on July 21st was also a great success particularly because it drew more young people to participate in an MTA event. Plans are to continue to schedule this event in years to come.

North Simcoe Rail Trail

Submitted by Frieda Baldwin

The North Simcoe Railtrail Inc has been dormant for the last 12 months.

Their 20 year lease with the Township of Springwater expires Oct 31, 2013.

Oak Ridges Trail Association

Submitted by Peter Schaefer

We have been holding our membership count at around 600 during the past year. While there has been no further deterioration, we also had no success in increasing our membership. This

continues to be a major concern to our Association and we are addressing it, in part, with follow up calls to lapsed members. Also, we continue to put forward a more serious publicity effort than in the past, and are doing so on several fronts, such as in local papers, at street festivals, with our monthly Discovery Night events and with presentations in libraries.

Our hike program remains very strong and is the pride of our Association. In 2013, 41 certified hike leaders led 343 group hikes. We led 77 winter hikes, 97 spring hikes, 80 summer hikes and we have planned 89 fall hikes, for a total of 343 hikes to the end of the year. There is a group hike offered almost every day of the week.

However, this enthusiasm for hiking is not reflected in the strengthening of our volunteer base and specifically not in the rejuvenation of our Board positions. Regarding our goal to attain strong regional representation by providing four Regional Directors with a solid network of volunteers, we are falling far short. It is essential for the future of our organization and for the rejuvenation of our ORTA leadership to find a much larger base of volunteers, helping with organizing events, publicity, membership and volunteer recruiting and other administrative matters, a base from which we could invite people to move into Board positions.

We continue to make appeals to our membership to increase our trail maintenance volunteer base in order to take care of our 275 km of main trail and its side trails. We now have 35 side trails with a combined length of 92 km. For now, we are organizing work crews from the more populous center of our trail around the Yonge Street corridor to look after any required maintenance work in the farther reaches of the Oak Ridges Moraine.

On June 15th, we again held our very successful annual Adventure Relay. We had 31 participating teams made up from over 400 competitors. More than 100 volunteers from our membership came out to man the checkpoints and to monitor the 160 km race with its 15 stages to be completed either by canoe (being the first stage on Rice Lake), biking or running along the Oak Ridges Moraine. Once again, the event, our major fundraiser, was a financial success with the required entrance fees, as well as with some donations and sponsorships.

While we have taken advantage of every opportunity that has presented itself to reroute the trail to the optimum off-road corridor, we have not been as successful over the last 10 years as we had hoped. We need to focus more intensely on relocating the trail away from roads, un-assumed road allowances and private lands. Finding new ways to overcome our challenges could perhaps yield better results. Some of the alternate approaches may involve reaching higher levels of government, exploring how we could utilize the mandate of government agencies and programs to our advantage, or suggesting that they expand their mandates or their policies. We have been trying to form a permanent committee, its membership and its meetings to be separate from the current Board, but we have the usual problem: no volunteers so far to take on this challenge.

The Greenbelt Foundation has been working with us over the past year and a half to find suitable locations for erecting signs along major regional highways to direct potential hikers to trail entrances as “Greenbelt walks on the Oak Ridges Moraine (Trail)”.

Palmerston Trail Association

Submitted by Susan Forbes

Palmerston Trail Association would like to report that we are having a good year on our walking trail.

Lots of people are enjoying the trail for leisurely walks without concerns from traffic. Other people use our trail for jogging and keeping fit.

We are keeping our trail well maintained.

We did not have any organized walks.

We have met with our Town of Minto Mayor and a couple of councillors and we discussed how we could extend the trail through to Harriston. This is still very important to us to reach this goal. So this is another starting point for it. It takes time to figure things out.

Hoping all other Trail Associations and Trail Clubs have had a successful year too.

Rideau Trail Association

Submitted by Dorothy Hudson and J. Robert Groves

At our 42nd AGM, held June 15, 2013, President Robert Groves reported on several of the achievements of the past year. For the first time in a long time a full slate of candidates for the board was presented, including five elected executive positions, seven appointed directors and four ex-officio members. The position of Marketing and Communications Director, vacant for so long, has been filled by Mark Coates, who will lead the initiative to enhance the Rideau Trail's public presence and hopefully attract new members. He immediately employed the social media and now the RTA is on Facebook and Twitter.

New 21 Trail Map sets have been produced, printed on waterproof paper, and are selling well. Maps continue to be available for download on our website free of charge, but some of our members prefer to purchase the map sets.

The RTA Central Club partnered with the Canadian Wildlife Federation for the fourth annual Walk for Wildlife, with over 40 people participating in this very successful event.

In May a delegation of 10 RTA members plus our trail founder's granddaughter was invited to the Opening ceremony of an honorary segment of the Trans Canada Trail at Rideau Hall and 24 Sussex Drive in Ottawa by their Excellencies the Rt. Hon. David Johnston, Governor General, and Mrs. Sharon Johnston.

Two of our members have qualified as Hike Leader Trainers under Hike Ontario standards. In September, 2013 we offered the first Hike Leaders' course in Perth. Margaret Lafrance of

Central Club and Clint Monaghan, from Ottawa, Hike Ontario certified Hike Leader Trainers trained seven new hike leaders.

A challenge we continue to face is a declining membership. Total membership as of June 2013 was 802, compared with 852 the year before, and 890 in June 2009. Related to this is a concern that younger folks and families with children are using the trail but not joining the association. We are hopeful that the efforts of our new Marketing and Communications Director will begin to net some improvements in these areas. This past year, our board approved a small increase for family memberships as well as a two-year membership option with built-in savings of five dollars for those who opt to pay for two years at once.

The Perth Running Goats Club is keen on using parts of the Rideau Trail for races. A “dry run” for an ultra-marathon will be run on the Rideau Trail from Foley Mountain near Westport to Perth in late October. Ten runners will participate with volunteers from the Kingston and Central RTA clubs covering off trail maintenance, water stations, and direction. Two years ago the Perth Running Goats Club celebrated the 40th anniversary of the Rideau Trail by organizing a half-marathon (26.5) race on our trail, from Smiths Falls to Perth. Forty runners participated with no casualties. An article was published in the Canadian Runner giving the Rideau Trail excellent profile. Next year it is hoped that an ultra-marathon open to all runner will bring even more attention to our trail on an international level.

The Rideau Trail Association is a founding member of Hike Ontario and continues its membership in HO. Robert Groves is a member of HO’s Public Education Committee.

Rouge Park Trail Club

Submitted by Diana Smyth

Overview of the program:

Rouge Park’s trail program supports the Rouge Park Heritage Appreciation and Visitor Experience program. It is volunteer-driven under the supervision of the park’s Trail Coordinator. We offer natural and cultural heritage interpretation, visitor greeting and navigation as well as education on trail etiquette, best practices and safety in an area of conservation. Volunteers act as walk leaders, ambassadors and photographers. The program started in January 2010 and we are happy to enter our 4th year of adventures in our near-urban wilderness, 30 minutes from downtown Toronto.

Our volunteers aim to imbue in Rouge Park visitors a sense of pride and care of the Park through positive words and actions, and being a role model of stewardship. This includes explaining to self-guided and guided walkers the Park’s code of conduct, and responding accordingly to actions that are not in keeping with that code, i.e. dogs off leash, walking off trail. We train our volunteer ambassadors and walk leaders toward achieving Certified Hike Leader certification plus Standard First Aid Level C.

What's Been Happening in 2013, Looking Ahead:

2013 recap:

2012 numbers:

Guided Walks:

- General Public Walks: 365
- General Public Walkers (new and returning): 2399
- Private Walks: 19
- Private Walkers: 365
- Total Walks: 384
- Total Walkers: 2764
- Total KM's walked (Av. 5km/outing): 1920

Ambassadors:

- KM's walked: 230
- Unique Visitor Contacts: 742
- Top 3 demographics: Adults, Families, Seniors
- Top 5 information items: Trail Map Trail Safety/Skills/Best Practices Tips, Code of Conduct Tips, Rouge Park Events/Volunteering, Gear and Clothing Tips
- The ambassadors also met more visitors with dogs ON leash than OFF, a milestone in our objective to see the on leash practice
- increase in our visitors.

In 2013 we activated funding from TD FEF's Markham chapter to bring up to 40 new volunteers on board. We anticipated seeing a new area in Rouge Park open up for walking, the first area in Markham's section of the park for public use, but at the time of writing it's not yet ready for the public.

Rouge Park is now in transition to become Canada's first National Urban Park. As noted in our AGM 2012 report, this will take some time, so the trail volunteers and I remain 'business as usual' in our work for the park, while helping visitors understand the timeline of transition and how they can stay connected to updates. The extra visibility of the park to the public because of this has helped increase our general visitorship and walk attendance, which has made our team an essential 'on the ground' asset to our visitors than ever before.

In February we trained and certified 12 new volunteer hike leaders/ambassadors, and added 1 new photo volunteer. Our team now has over 50 volunteers.

In April, we added 2 more walks on weekends, to make 4 walks each Saturday and Sunday, concluding at the end of October when we return to 3 walks on weekends. The result showed a consistent attendance in the face of summer vacations and heavy rain on many walk days. Our Wednesday walks have maintained a strong showing throughout the year.

September 1 to November 15 is our 4th Fall Biodiversity Walks Series, sponsored by Ontario Power Generation (OPG). The OPG series is the annual season to 'amp up' our walks by

challenging leaders with 'new' interpretive topics and gathering guest experts to add their layer of professional experience and enthusiasm to the outings.

Our private walks offerings continue to thrive. We continue to welcome new groups, and this summer saw summer day camps come out for a guided walk as part of their activities. These walks support the volunteer program and Rouge Park by way of a \$5 per person contribution.

We are now looking ahead to fall school groups coming for private walks, and training new volunteers in October/November.

At time of writing, 2013 walks totals were:

Public Walks:

1538 walkers

294 walks

Private Walks:

714 walkers

13 walks

Ambassadors' data will be shared in the full recap of 2013, to come in the first 2014 report.

Simcoe County Trails

Submitted by Frieda Baldwin

Number of members: 11

Number of volunteers: approx. 50

Thanks to a 2 year grant from the Ontario Trillium Foundation, Simcoe County Trails (SCT) is working on the following projects:

Interactive maps (www.simcoetrails.ca/maps)

In partnership with the County of Simcoe's GIS department, we are extremely pleased with our new interactive mapping which provides a virtual story map tour of Simcoe County's Loop and Linear Trails. You will also find all the information you need to plan a walk, a ride, or a snowshoe or cross country ski outing. Enjoy!!



Other related projects we are currently working on involve a mobile app and a new format map book, based on the above virtual maps.

HETAP Trail Assessments for Accessibility

In the spring of 2013, SCT purchased a HETAP cart to assess the accessibility of trails for people with disabilities.

HETAP stands for High Efficiency Trail Assessment Process and has been developed to accurately and consistently collect information on the **length, grade, cross slope, width, surface type and obstructions of a trail, as well as inventory trail features**, such as signage, amenities, maintenance issues, etc.

Simcoe County Trails has been certified to undertake Trail Access Information (TAI) Assessments, which enable land managers or trail owner/operators, such as government agencies and park authorities, to obtain accurate trail data, and meet the **Ontario Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities (AODA) Guidelines**

www.mcsc.gov.on.ca/documents/en/mcsc/accessibility/iasr_info/trails_beach.pdf



A HETAP cart is equipped with:

- sensor box to record the grades and cross slopes of the trail
- magnets on the wheels to track trail distance and feature locations
- camera to record pictures along the trail
- GPS unit to collect latitude and longitude coordinates
- laptop with software to analyze and present data gathered

HETAP Trail Assessments:

- Enable potential trail users to determine which trails will satisfy their interests and abilities, thus creating a safer, more enjoyable trail experience for all user groups and abilities.
- Provide land managers with objective and accurate information about their trails, helping define budget needs, management goals and maintenance strategies for the trail system.
- Obtain accurate data for posting on trail maps, at trail heads, in literature and on web sites.
- For more information on our HETAP Trail Assessment Services, contact info@simcoetrails.ca or call 705-245-1005

Pilgrimage Routes

Simcoe County Trails, in partnership with the Jesuits of Canada, is developing permanent pilgrimage routes to the Martyr's Shrine in Midland, which is considered THE National Shrine of Canada. The routes will follow local trails and permission from local municipalities and agencies is being requested and good progress is being made in obtaining land use agreements. The routes will allow individuals as well as organized groups to walk towards the Martyr's Shrine by following permanent signage on quiet and safe off-road pathways.

Trans Canada Trail Ontario has engaged Simcoe County Trails (SCT) to help with route investigations and/or trail development in Simcoe County, where gaps in the trail still exist.

New Tecumseth

Thanks to funding from the Trans Canada Trail, the Town of New Tecumseth has started the development of the first 5 km of railtrail, to close the gap between the Caledon Trailway and the Thornton-Cookstown Trans Canada Trail. When completed, the trail will extend for 25 kms from the New Tecumseth/Innisfil municipal border south of Cookstown to the New Tecumseth/Caledon municipal border at highway 9. Further development is phased, but completion is scheduled for 2014.

As a unique feature, the New Tecumseth section of the Trans Canada Trail will have a parallel horse trail next to the limestone screenings multi-use path.

Springwater Township

On January 21, 2013, a deputation was made to the Township of Springwater, to ask for their consideration to develop the Nine Mile Portage Heritage Trail between the North Simcoe Railtrail and the City of Barrie, as part of the Trans Canada Trail and as an Active Transportation route. This project is delayed till 2014.

Ramara Township & Chippewa First Nations

Finding an appropriate route through the area is rather challenging due to the many lakes, waterways and wetlands.

However, discussions are well under way to:

- register the Ramara Railtrail as part of the Trans Canada Trail
- develop the abandoned railway through Chippewa of Rama First Nations Lands (north of the casino)
- develop a safe trail to connect to the Trans Canada Trail at Cooper's Falls in Muskoka.

Trails training

In the last year, Simcoe County Trails (SCT) hosted two very successful Emergency First Aid Courses for trail volunteers, as well as a Hike Ontario Hike Leader Certification course.

The Hike Leader course (photo above) was attended by Ganaraska Hiking Club members, whereas the first aid courses were attended by trail volunteers from local hiking clubs (such as Ganaraska), as well as from mountain biking and motorized trail clubs.

Trails Maintenance

Due to the unusual high level of rain, combined with warm weather, we've had a lot of trouble with controlling the growth of weeds on our loop trails. We have however discovered that the old fashioned scythe is a wonderful tool for cutting tall weeds. But due to the distances of our trails, we may look into purchasing a "walk behind brush hog" for 2014.

HTG name change to SCT

In an effort to better align our name with the geographic area we represent, i.e. trails in the County of Simcoe, we have changed our formal name to Simcoe County Trails. This is also reflected in our new website name, www.simcoetrails.ca, and we are in the process of finalizing a new logo.

Insurance

We wish to thank Hike Ontario to go to bat for us in an effort of continue obtaining insurance for our organization through the Hike Ontario insurance program. However, in the end we had to find another provider (Oasis Insurance), which was able to accommodate the fact that we are not membership based, and represent the interests of other trail user groups.

South Common B T Hikers Club

Submitted by Mike Erison

History

The South Common Community Centre is located in the heart of Mississauga's Erin Mills community. Erin Mills' original design incorporated a web of urban trails resulting in the recent creation of a neighbourhood hiking group. Certified hike leaders are members of the club, and the group also purchases a Corporate Membership with the BTC in order to support this organization and participate in their activities.

Ongoing Development

Still very much in the formative stage, our organizational objectives are to increase community awareness and build local partnerships. Using word of mouth advertising to build membership, the SCCC Hikers use the Community Centre as a central meeting point for carpooling and local walks. We also run a Yahoo Groups web site to communicate club events. Leadership development, the education of new members, and their initiation in the joys and benefits of walking and hiking will continue to be our focus.

Don't be surprised to find our members showing up to share your fun! And you'll always be welcome at ours.

Thames Valley Trail Association

Submitted by Ruth Hoch

Membership has increased this year from 350 to 375.

Extensive trail maintenance has been undertaken by many dedicated volunteers throughout the year: new bridges, reroutes and cutting fallen trees. Members of RBC provided a community day of service to add chicken wire to bridges in the Plover mills section. The trail is in the best shape it has been in for many years.

We have continued to offer almost 300 hikes this year.

The 40th anniversary end to end hikes have been very successful. Twelve 10 k hikes have been completed since April, with a group of about 25-30 for each hike. About 25 hikers received their end to end badges at the final hike Oct 6. We hope to continue this format next year. Two of the four anniversary hikes have also been well attended and the final one will be completed the day of the summit. Open hikes Wednesday evenings in the summer and one Sunday a month all year are also very popular. A successful interclub bus trip (with Grand Valley Trail Association) to Webster's Falls was completed in September. Another end to end hike was completed the first week of October for Ontario hiking week. Many hikes are being offered in October to promote hiking.

Our website continues to be upgraded with more hikes being posted online and more members receiving their newsletters electronically. Our newsletter editor is providing recognition of volunteers in each edition of the trekker.

Club members have spent many hours preparing for our 40th anniversary and the Hike Ontario summit. We now have an anniversary song complete with photos of the trail, composed by Bob and Tom Friesen. We look forward to the guest speakers, workshops, photo contest winners, trail history and hikes. We hope to see many of you there.

We are pleased to now have a vice president who is learning the ropes and plans to step into the role of president in the next year.

Thunder Bay Hiking Association

Submitted by Hilda Postenka

While still a healthy, active club, participation in the TBHA experienced a drop over the past year, from 155 to 136 paid memberships, of which 93 were individual and 43 family. These numbers represented a change in total members from 226 to 195. However, participation in outings was still strong, with an average turnout of 10 members per event. This year 73 outings were scheduled, of which 53 were hikes, 3 hike/snowshoes, 14 ski/snowshoes, 2 paddles, and 1 bike. Unfortunately 12 outings had to be cancelled to inclement weather, which is an unusually high number of cancellations in a year.

Our club hikes on many different trails in and around the city of Thunder Bay, the north shore of Lake Superior, and even northern Minnesota. We feel very fortunate to be able to experience such variety in our hiking locations. Our club maintains several sections of trail on crown land, but we don't claim any ownership of these trails.

A very large project the TBHA has been working on for the past two years is the production of the third edition of our trail guide, which will be published this fall. We are very pleased with its quality, and believe it will be a hit with the community, which has been waiting impatiently for its arrival.

We are thankful for the support of Hike Ontario in obtaining insurance coverage for our club, and this upcoming year look forward to their assistance in certifying more of our hike leaders.

For more information, www.tbha.ca

Voyageur Trail Association

Submitted by Carole Blaquiere

It has been an active year for the VTA. It started with a new website which was launched with many new features such as an updatable calendar and easy to navigate tabs. This was created in conjunction with a Facebook page to bring us into the social media age.

The Voyageur Trail Association officially turns 40 in October 2013 and we are planning to celebrate. Over the past six months we have come up with a number of ways to raise the profile of the VTA, encourage new users, and engage our members. Here's a sample of the kinds of things we've been implementing:

- Encourage trail users to collectively walk/snowshoe/ski every kilometre of the trail (about 700 km) between fall 2013 and fall 2014.
- Hold special events across the trail system to launch the celebrations.
- Recognize those who hike at least 40 km over the year.
- Spruce up the specific under-utilized portions of the trail in summer 2013 with some trail maintenance blitzes in May and in August.
- Special 40th anniversary geocaches.
- Our logo has been redesigned to include the tag line 'Hiking since 1973'.

The 40th anniversary celebrations were launched with kickoff events in Elliot Lake on August 24th and in Sault Ste. Marie on September 28th. Over the next year we have a number of challenges including the All-Trail End-to-End Challenge and the 40-kilometre Trail Challenge.

The All-Trail challenge is a collective effort to traverse the entire 700+ kilometers of trail over the 12-month period from August 24, 2013 to August 24, 2014. To keep track of this, trail users can submit their hikes, snowshoe outings, etc. to be added to the online trail registry, which will be updated regularly on the website.

The 40-kilometre Trail Challenge encourages hikers to cover at least 40 kilometers of the VTA trail over the 12-month period (Aug. 24, 2013 to Aug. 24, 2014) to receive a special VTA commemorative prize in recognition of this accomplishment. There will be a form to help track the hikes. The forms will have to be submitted by Sept. 15, 2014 to be eligible for a prize. Winners will be announced at the fall 2014 Annual General Meeting.

Although we have had a quiet summer of hiking there has been lots of maintenance with at least 70 kilometers of trail that has a low utilization rate cleared and brought up to good standards. That does not include the extra efforts that have been accomplished but not reported. This was all in preparation for the 40th anniversary challenges. Unfortunately, recent flooding in the area means some back roads are closed and parts of the trail more difficult to access.

Sadly, we lost some key people associated with the VTA. Dr. Ian Morrison was one of the founding members of the Voyageur Trail Association, passed away in March at the age of 73. He assumed the role of General Secretary to the fledgling VTA in the fall of 1973 and was a signatory to the application for incorporation of the Association. He served as General Secretary for two periods: 1973-1984, and again from 1994-1998. Closer to home for the folks that attended the Hike Ontario Summit in 2011, Alan Day, former VTA President and long-time member of the Coordinating Council, passed away on July 20, at St. Joseph's Hospital in Elliot Lake. An active hiker and outdoors man in Elliot Lake, Alan was the winner of Elliot Lake's Civic

Award in 2011. A tireless worker for trails in the Elliot Lake area, he devoted countless hours to the Coureurs de Bois and VTA. He left his stamp on the Cobre Lake Trail and the Westview Park Trans Canada Trail Pavilion, among other projects. Alan will be dearly missed.

Under the guidance of one of the VTA coordination council members, a student from Lakehead University put together a risk management plan for the association. The draft of which will be forwarded to Hike Ontario shortly. In addition to the plan, the council decided to purchase two SPOT Satellite GPS devices for use on outings and work parties that are out of cell phone range. This is a safety precaution, as the device allows the user to send pre-determined messages to family, friends, and emergency contacts. One unit resides with the Sauteaux Club, another has been purchased for the Coureurs de Bois Club.

Currently we have 152 memberships that are in good standing (paid) since Sept. 2013.

Waterloo 55+ Seniors' Hiking Club

Submitted by Raymond Ramshaw

This club has been run by two coordinators (Raymond and Liz Ramshaw) for the last eight years. The programme has had an unchanged format of providing a 10-14km hike once a week throughout the year. Occasionally there are extra hikes depending on local festivities. The hike locations are usually in Waterloo Region. Social activities after hikes are strongly encouraged.

We do not create trails or maintain trails. We use existing trails and have about 70 tracks on file.

The procedures followed for all hikes are similar to that which HFholidays uses.

These are associated with safety, liability, risk management etc. HF is one of the largest hiking organizations in the world and operates worldwide. The club's coordinators are members of HF and each of them have over 70 weeks of experience hiking with HF over the last 20 years. Most of the procedures followed by HF can be read in their brochure (see on line at www.hfholidays.co.uk or email Teachers' Travel at info@teacherstravel.com in Toronto).

The number of club members is capped at 50 and there is usually a small waiting list. Members pay a small subscription, enough to pay for membership of Hike Ontario and Hike Ontario's insurance plan.

Hike participation in 2013 was reasonable. The average attendance was 16 (max. 34, min. 4).

One challenge, that the club has, is to train hike leaders. We have 5 leaders, but it is not easy to increase this number. Some members do not like to use a GPS and this device is at the centre of designing new tracks and leading existing hikes. Every leader and back marker carry loaded GPSs with the track of the day. Most of our members like to be led.

Another challenge for the club has been to formalize a risk management plan. Most seniors like to minimize risk, but it is not easy to get anyone to sit down and formalize a written document. It would be much easier if Hike Ontario had access to an acceptable plan and circulated it to the clubs.

VIRGINIA JOHNSON AWARD

Luis Costa is the deserving winner of the Virginia Johnson Award for 2012 - 2013. This award is dedicated to the memory of Virginia Johnson, a wonderful volunteer who showed tremendous dedication and proficiency in making Hike Ontario an effective organization.

Luis is a worthy recipient because he demonstrates these characteristics. Luis has presented at multiple conferences, helped us with technical presentations such as the Virtual Walk across the Province. He has been a Vice President of Hike Ontario who remained on the board as the Chair of the Certification Committee. He has worked on the Certified Hike Leader Manual, expanded the training of more instructors to cover the province and created processes and documents to improve the Certification process. Luis shows passion and competence for Hike Leader training and will continue to give leadership as a Hike Leader trainer and program developer assisting us as we transition to update our system of Hike Leader Training with improved courses in Wilderness Hike Leader and Map and Compass courses.

The executive of Hike Ontario is pleased to congratulate Luis Costa, the 2012 – 2013 winner of the Virginia Johnson Award.

VOLUNTEER OF THE YEAR AWARDS

Each year, countless Ontarians volunteer their time, energy, creative and professional talents to enhance Ontario's hiking and walking opportunities. These individuals devote endless hours to serve on committees, champion important issues and causes, coordinate events and/or donate their business expertise and resources to further the positive growth and development of Ontario's pedestrian based trail network.

Annually, Hike Ontario recognizes three individuals who have contributed significantly to the success of a club program or project in one or more of the following areas: Advocacy, Marketing, Public Relations, Governance, Trail Development, Events, Risk Management, Land Securement or Landowner Relations, Fundraising and/or Hike Leadership.

RECIPIENTS OF THE 2012-2013 VOLUNTEER OF THE YEAR AWARDS ARE:

Cathy Johnstone, Grand Valley Trails Association

A long-time member of the GVTA, Cathy lives in Port Stanley; however, the distance from K-W does not keep her from being active and involved. As Hike Coordinator, Cathy communicates with hike leaders and organizes the hikes publicized in this newsletter and on the website. A certified hike leader herself, Cathy has conducted GVTA's excellent Hike Leader Training workshops in early March for a number of years. She was asked by Hike Ontario to present a Hike Leader Training work- shop in Kitchener in May 2013. GVTA members completing End-to-End hikes know that Cathy distributes their merit badges.

The photo of Cathy to the right was taken in July as she hiked Gros Morne in Newfoundland. She states: "I have been volunteering for the GVTA for 12+ years. I love my work, leading, teaching and being a part of the newsletter team. I want to share with the rest of the world what I love about leading hikes."

Submitted by: Arijana Ilibasic
Volunteers Director
Grand Valley Trail Association

Guy Engels, Thames Valley Trail Association

The Thames Valley Trail is a 115 kilometer hiking trail along the Thames River from the "Wild North" linking the Avon Trail at St Marys to the "Lonely South" where it joins the Elgin Trail. Like all volunteer managed trails it requires tremendous maintenance hours by dozens of volunteers.

We are pleased to report that it is in the best shape ever due to these volunteers who are coordinated by one Trail Maintenance Director – Guy Engels.

Furthermore, Guy has personally walked and worked on much of the trail as he takes trail maintenance as an opportunity to both assist and oversee these volunteer managed sections. He has set up opportunities for outside groups to also become involved such as the Royal Bank whose employees donated 30 hours of service chicken wiring bridges to reduce the slip hazard for which the bank donated \$1000 in true Tom Sawyer fashion. Guy has also coordinated chain saw work and overseen and laboured on a trail reroute that took the trail off a hazardous section of river flood plain and moved it back up to an original pathway.

Guy is always diplomatic and soft spoken. His "friendly persuasion approach" has also been an asset in dealing with other trail maintenance entities which include Fanshawe Park, the Upper and Lower Thames Conservation Areas, The City of London, Ontario Parks (for Komoka Provincial Parks), the University of Western Ontario and St Peter's Seminary as well as some private businesses and dozens of local landowners.

You could not find a better blend of ambassador, trail worker or organizer than Guy Engels and TVTA is proud to nominate him as our 2013 Volunteer of the Year.

Submitted by: Ruth Hoch
Hike Ontario Representative
Thames Valley Trail Association

The "Late" Mr Harold Culham, Ganaraska Hiking Trail Association

On behalf of the Ganaraska Hiking Trail Association, I would like to nominate the "Late" Mr Harold Culham of Wasaga Beach, for the Hike Ontario's Volunteer of the Year Award. During our Annual General Meeting it was unanimously voted that we would nominate this "Trailblazer" who through out

his life and death, volunteered his time, energy, creative and professional talents to enhance Ontario's hiking and walking opportunities. Mr Harold Culham fell ill late last summer with pancreatic cancer but up until then there was hardly a day he didn't spend out on the trails; often seen in his iconic hiking boots and a cowboy hat.

For decades Harold has been blazing trails, creating some of the best hiking, biking, snowmobile and cross country ski trails in the Simcoe County and Georgian Bay areas. Harold was always a valued and reliable committee member; even though he would often admit that he would rather be out getting things done, rather than sitting in meetings; he remained passionate for promoting and building trails.

Harold began his trail advocacy by making trails for the local snowmobile club in 1979. He was President for many years of the Wasaga Snowmobile Club and Ganaraska Hiking Trail Association. Harold was also the Founding member of the Mad River and Wasaga Beach Hiking Clubs. He was also an active member of several trail advocacy and likeminded groups including, but not limited to the Trails of Georgian Bay Committee, the Active Transportation Advisory Committee, Communities in Bloom, Friends of the Nancy Island, the Healthy Network Committee, Community Gardens Committee, Share the Road, and Wasaga Beach Community Policing Committee. For his efforts, Harold Culham was named to the Order of Wasaga Beach in 2007 and, in his honour a Wasaga Beach road bears the name Culham Trail.

Until the very end Harold was lobbying for trail improvements, specifically for a multi-use walking and bike trail. Harold had organized several bedside meetings with other key players and formed a committee to see the multi-use trail press forward. Sadly, Harold did not live to see the Grand Opening of the uniquely 'pink blazed' 15 KM loop trail which starts at the Schoonertown Heritage Site, in Wasaga Beach and takes walkers and cyclists on a journey throughout hardwood forest featuring a exceptional ecosystem. On Saturday, 1 June 2013, the Town of Wasaga Beach hosted a celebration of Mr Harold Culham, unveiling a monument in honour and memory of this "Trailblazer". - His legacy lives on.

His passion for discovering new paths will be experienced for generations to come and remembered by those whose lives he touched. We lost a great trail advocate, but we will be thankful for all the great trails he built in his time. I can think of no person whom has contributed more to the development of Ontario's pedestrian based trail network then Harold Culham, nor can I think of anyone who is more deserving of the Hike Ontario's Volunteer of the Year Award.

Submitted by: Jeremy Bonnar
President Mad River Club & Hike Ontario Rep
Ganaraska Hiking Trail Association

FRIENDS OF HIKE ONTARIO

Hike Ontario relies on donations and the efforts of our volunteers to sustain and further our programs. Invaluable programs such as:

- Young Hikers Program
- Hike Leader Certification
- Safe Hikers Program
- Best Practices Research
- Volunteer of the Year Awards
- Ontario Hiking Week
- Annual Hiking Summit & Conference
- Helping local hiking and trail clubs with organizational and complex liability and insurance issues.

When you make a donation of \$25.00 or more to Hike Ontario, you automatically become a Friend of Hike Ontario and you join a network of people, from Ontario and beyond, who are committed to protecting, restoring, enjoying and sharing the joys and beauty of hiking and walking in Ontario.

Friends of Hike Ontario help us:

- Protect the precious hiking trails and foot paths of Ontario
- Advocate for the responsible management of Ontario's public lands and the creation of more hiking and foot paths
- Encourage conservation and appreciation of the natural environment by connecting Ontarians to the nature around them
- Educate adults and youth and provide them with the resources to inform and motivate them to conserve Ontario's trails
- Encourage walking for recreation, transportation and health
- Encourage good trail maintenance and hiking practices
- Encourage and facilitate the development of trail building and hiking clubs in Ontario
- Maintain and disseminate information on hiking and hiking trails

We graciously accept donations of any amount and our Friends are recognized for the cumulative donations they make over the years.

Charitable tax receipts will be issued for all donations and special events and recognition gifts have also been planned for each category.

Hike Ontario wishes to thank the many individuals and organizations that have made donations in support of our programs and services.

The longest journey begins with a single step, not with a turn of the ignition key. That's the best thing about a walking, the journey itself. It doesn't much matter whether you get where you're going or not. You'll get there anyway. Every good hike brings you eventually back home. Right were you started."

-- Edward Abbey



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