



“The long distance hiker, a breed set apart,  
From the likes of the usual pack.  
He’ll shoulder his gear, be hittin’ the trail;  
Long gone, long ‘fore he’ll be back.”

- M.J. Eberhart

# Annual Report



2013 - 2014

**Get Outside. Get Healthy. Hike.**

Hike Ontario

**Annual Report 2013-2014**

[www.hikeontario.com](http://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

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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 2013 – 2014***

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 2013-2014***

Diana Smyth	Certification Committee
Mike Curtis	Public Education Committee
Bill Mungall	Issues, Policy & Advocacy Committee
Raymond Soucy	Fund Raising Committee
Brendan Zamojc	Planning and Development Committee



## ***Board Members – as appointed by our Member Clubs***

Karen Hill	Avon Trail
Dave Gillians	Bayfield River Valley Trail
Ron Knight	Bighead River Heritage Association (Trout Hollow Trail)
Robert Humphreys	Bruce Trail Association
Deborah Corbett	Durham Outdoors Club
D.J. Smale	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, Toronto Green Community
Bruce Lamb	Lucan Area Trails Association
Ethel-Mae Seaman	Maitland Trail Association
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
Hilda Postenka	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

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Submitted by Tom Friesen

Hike Ontario has worked hard in several directions over the past year.

The Summit in London "Meet Me at the Thames" was a numerical and informational success and helped to celebrate the 40th Anniversary of the Thames Valley Trail.

We are delighted with the extremely low rates for our 5 million Public Liability and 2 million Directors' and Officers' Insurance. This makes insurance affordable for our hiking clubs and trail associations which wish to participate.

We eliminated some member groups which were not reporting to us and were deemed to be a risk to our Insurance program. Without regular reporting and checks that they were complying with the warranties that our insurer requires, we had no idea of their compliance with the Ten Elements of Risk Management. We believed directing them to find their own insurance, protects the safety and viability of the responsible groups in the Hike Ontario plan. Our plan has a "flow through" funding structure where we not only do not make any money but we pay our own share. Therefore demitting non- conforming participants does not cost us income but can be viewed as responsible proactive Risk Management. Brendon Zamojc has been in charge of the insurance program through his position as chair of the Program and Planning Committee.

Hike Ontario had a coordinated provincial response to the Ontario Trails' Strategy renewal plan. I was personally delighted with the quality and range of the submissions we made at 4 of 5 centres across the province. An effective committee chaired by Will Van Hemessen was responsible for this. I also have to thank Bill Mungall for stepping in as interim chair. We also submitted to the Finance Minister around our 4 asks for the Spring Budget. The "Asks" are: money to support staff for trail associations, removal of the P.S.T. on insurance, a tax credit for landowners who allow pedestrian trail use on their property and outright removal of the right to sue for using pedestrian trails where no fee is charged.

Young Hiker Program manuals were delivered to school boards as the consequence of a grant we received from the T.D. Friends of the Environment for 16 school boards in the Public and Catholic systems. Eco school programs were particularly targeted. Planning continues to set up an ongoing program plan to widen the use of these materials which seek to reverse "Nature Deficit Disorder". Mike Curtis stepped in to act as interim chair for this committee when our designated chair resigned.

The Mood Walks project engaged many volunteers and Safe Hiker Instructors as hundreds of CMHA clients took training and participated in hundreds of possible hikes. CMHA staff members continue to be trained as Safe Hiker Instructors and Certified Hike Leaders. We have billed for our services in an amount of close to \$20,000. Some projects are still ongoing. I was also extremely pleased that one of the trainings took place in French using French materials. The response of volunteers and hike leaders to this project was extremely positive overall.

The Certification area was one of the most active as Diana Smyth worked tirelessly to create an administration manual, assist in course delivery and hold regular meetings of the Certification Committee. A number of Safe Hiker Instructor and Certified Hike Leader Instructors were trained and courses delivered. This groundwork will stand us in good stead as the Seniors' Hike Initiative moves forward.

Our website was totally rebuilt by our office manager, David Rosenblun-Bourdieu and the site transferred to a new server.

David has continued to update the Administration Manual which I expect to be up to date for this Summit.

We changed our phone service to a different provider due to the cost of the service and problems receiving an accurate bill.

Our treasurer has worked steadily to clean up records and improve processes. She has been excellent with payroll and suggested some positive steps to bring us in compliance with CRA regulations.

Our grant application for the Seniors' Hike Initiative was accepted in the amount of \$65,200. Raymond Soucy as Chair of Fund Raising deserves credit for his efforts in effectively securing this grant. This project will be commenced this fall and continue until March of 2016 in partnership with Older Adult Centres of Ontario. I was at a conference they held on October 6th and was gratified by the enthusiasm I saw for this project from many delegates. Two brochures were passed out and contacts collected.

The Compass 2020 process has started and will continue through the next year. Ron Hunt will be engaging us in determining our values and directions for the next five years at this time.

I gave a couple of CBC radio interviews about the two landowner issues of 4 "asks" (removing the right to sue and a tax credit for landowners) as well as during a Mood Walks "It is impossible to dampen our spirits" Hike.

I attended and brought greetings at several Annual Meetings of our Trail Associations such as The Elgin Trail, the Bruce Trail Conservancy and the Humber Valley Heritage Trail as well as the Ontario Trails Council Annual Meeting. I spoke at the opening of a Friendship Trail in Short Hills tomorrow (linking with a Friendship Trail in Africa). I had Jake Reynolds present on behalf of Hike Ontario at the Credit Valley Conservation Authority on Wednesday, Oct 1 in recognition of Ontario Hiking Week for their "Closing the Gap" launch. I led an End to End of the Thames Valley Trail for Ontario Hiking Week.

I have trained several Certified Hike Leader Instructors in locations in London, St Thomas, King City, North Bay, Owen Sound and Georgetown. I also trained Safe Hiker Instructors in Burlington, Toronto and Penetanguishene.

The Volunteer of the Year Awards nomination form was sent out to clubs and we will be announcing three winners at the Summit.

Planning for our Annual Summit in Guelph has proceeded very well, it promises to be a great weekend. Katherine Wheatley, a folksinger with strong environmental roots is performing in the evening. She will perform some of her own songs as well as lead us in a sing-a-long. Our hopes for this Summit are that it may be a “sell out”.

I have been gratified to meet and work with some wonderful volunteers and really appreciate those who have been active on the executive and board. We have a volunteer coordinator, Lisa Vaughn working with David and being proactive in obtaining volunteers.

I have been concerned of course with the lack of a Vice President and the need to have some acting chairs for a couple of our important committees. I also believe that both recruitment of effective volunteers and representatives that work both to represent Hike Ontario to their boards are critical for Hike Ontario to have a future that lasts more than 40 years. I therefore encourage you to get involved.

## STANDING COMMITTEE REPORTS

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### *Certification Committee*

Submitted by Diana Smyth

The 2013/14 year for Certification in Hike Ontario was nothing short of ‘happening’, with a strong list of activities, progress and growth helping us to advance our plans to bring more training/certification opportunities to more people in more parts of the province.

#### ***A summary by the numbers:***

- 62 new instructors came on board in 13/14, adding on to our team in the Safe Hiker, Certified Hike Leader and Wilderness Day Hike Leader courses. This includes instructors who came on board to support Mood Walks or as a result of Mood Walks.
- One new Wilderness Day Hike Leaders was certified.
- 27 new Certified Hike Leaders were trained. We were also pleased to provide CHL training to high schools as part of the Ontario Ministry of Education’s High Skills Specialty Major program.
- 38 new Safe Hikers were introduced to best practices for successful hikes, including high school students as part of their Phys Ed. Curriculum.

We gave courses reaching almost to all ‘corners’ of the province, as far east as Brockville, as far south as St. Catharines, as far north as Thunder Bay and as far west as Owen Sound.

Ultimately, we gave 40 courses (not including Mood Walks) from Nov 1 2013 to the time of writing this report. Of those, I would like to give a special commendation to Tom Friesen for not only handling the bulk of the Mood Walks work but for giving probably over a dozen SH and CHL classes, logging thousands of kilometres to reach new groups and bring Hike Ontario training and certification to them.

***Over in the administration side of things:***

We moved away from the old paper registration forms and onto an online form to streamline signups for courses. Other online forms have come forward to help register course requests, log courses for tracking, take applications for new instructors and the evaluation form for new instructor trainees, for example.

Major strides were made in our instructor mentoring program, with a revised process from recruitment to evaluation of new trainers. We also introduced an Equivalencies option for the CHL course, for those who for accepted reasons cannot access the class in-person and/or who have the valid pre-requisites to be granted CHL status by way of demonstrating CHL criteria through an interview and written component. Many thanks to all those who participated in these projects.

On the website, I supported adding content to the relevant pages for certification and training to give a new home to these areas of information and recruitment.

Moving forward we still have work ahead of us to keep momentum of our progress, and I look forward to supporting the incoming Chair in achieving continued advancement.

I would also in particular like to thank David Rosenblun-Bourdieu for his non-stop support to help bring the new items I introduced to fruition.

***Issues, Policy and Advocacy Committee***

Submitted by Bill Mungall

This committee has been chaired by Will Van Hemessen who had to step back when work took him out north and now of province through the summer of 2014. Bill Mungall has been working as acting chair.

The year began with a lot of activity around the hearings for the renewal of the Ontario Trails Strategy. A team of Hike Ontario activists such as Dorothy Hudson, Todd Bardes, Frieda Baldwin, Bill Mungall, Carol Blanquiere, Marco & Judy Ponti-Scargim, and Judy Kwasnica. Presentations were made at 4 of the five sites through November 2013 and to the Minister of Finance in February of 2014.

The four “asks” we presented were support to hire staff to assist volunteer managed trails stay viable, removal of the PST from insurance payments we make to protect our trail associations and landowners and allow people to hike across the province at no charge, removal of the right to sue and a tax credit for landowners. In an election year, we did not see any effect of these requests.

Some relationships with public servants have been developed and they are currently more aware of Hike Ontario as the voice of pedestrian trail users. This has resulted in invitations to attend conferences and trade shows that affect the trail community.

There was some media attention about the four “asks” from the C.B.C. during the summer.

We belong to the O.T.C. and Tom Friesen attended their Annual meeting at McMaster University on our behalf. See his report elsewhere in this Annual Report.

We have also expressed concern over Lyme Disease information, assessment and treatment in Ontario.

Hike Canada En Marche information has been disseminated at Hike Ontario board meetings as this is also under the purview of this committee.

### ***Fundraising Committee***

Submitted by Raymond Soucy

The biggest proposal for The Fundraising Committee this year was the Seniors’ Hike Initiative grant application made to the Ministry of Sports and Recreation’s Communities Fund. Last year, Hike Ontario applied for the same grant both as a Hike Ontario Program (Seniors’ Hike Initiative) and as a supporting member of the CMHA (Canadian Mental Health Association) “Mood Walks” grant application. Hike Ontario’s application was not successful but CMHA’s Mood Walk program was approved. Using the experience gained in the previous year’s grant application, the Fundraising committee once again applied to the Ministry of Sports and Recreation’s Communities Fund for funding to support a Seniors’ Hike Initiative. The application was started in January and in July we learned that we had been successful and will receive a grant for a total of \$65,200 to carry out the Seniors’ Hike Initiative. Below is a brief description of the program.

Our goal is to motivate seniors that are 55 years old and older to improve their physical and mental health by helping breakdown the barriers to getting started on hiking and walking. At the end, to leave a training (Train the Trainer and Certified Hike leaders) and support infrastructure (links to local hiking clubs) that ensures the program can continue beyond the "Seniors Hike Initiative".

Project “Seniors’ Hike Initiative” will offer hiking courses to older adults and seniors (55 years old or older) in Ontario: "Safe Hikers" program and "Certified Hike Leaders" program, offered once a year each during the two year grant period will train seniors to hike safely and for those who wish to provide leadership. These will take place at 15 Seniors’ Community Centres across Ontario.

- Safe Hikers program (For beginners- Course duration- 3 weeks 14 hours)



- Certified Hike Leader Training (For experienced hikers- 1 days training = 8 hour course). These leaders will lead future hikes.
- Safe Hiker and Certified Hike Leader Trainings (co-taught with established instructors using a mentoring method during the second Safe Hiker and Certified Hike Leader courses offered at each location.)
- On site Trainers will be developed at each Seniors' Centre as part of the second year courses so that trainers exist on site so that courses continue after the grant period.

You can contact the Hike Ontario President for more information or if you would like to be involved.

### ***Public Education Committee***

Submitted by Mike Curtis

The Public Education Committee has advanced the mission of Hike Ontario on several fronts:

Our website has been updated and modernized to a content management, device friendly version through the work of David Rosenblun-Bourdieu in association with our Public Education Committee.

Events like Spring Hike Day, International Trails Day and Ontario Hiking Week were featured activities that were promoted through the website and our social media connections. We hope our clubs and trail associations will utilize this opportunity even more in future.

A Social Media coordinator worked through the summer to use social media to promote Hike Ontario activities. We are delighted that Stacey Hodder, Hike Ontario's Secretary, has taken up this role since Amanda Hewitt has left the post to return to her studies.

Tom Friesen represented us at some Annual Meetings of Trail Associations and with the Bruce Trail when they opened the Short Hills/Rim of Africa Friendship Trail. Jake Reynolds served as an Ambassador in the "Closing the Gap" launch at the Credit Valley Conservation Authority.

We were able to generate some media activity. A C.B.C. radio segment was around a couple of the asks we presented to the Government of Ontario to remove the right to sue for pedestrians who access private land along hiking trails at no cost and for a tax credit to reward these landowners was presented. A second C.B.C. segment profiled one of the Mood Walks groups as they hiking through heavy rain in positive spirits.

The Young Hiker Program Manual has been distributed across the province to school boards under a Grant from the T.D. Friends of the Environment. This grant helped us to produce 400 manuals for distribution to schools where one manual will serve the entire school.

A committee is currently working to make this document more widely used by creating workshops for teachers in training as well as experienced educators working with younger children.

We have awarded three Volunteer of the Year awards to members of Trail Associations and the Virginia Johnson Award.

This Annual Report is produced under the Public Education Committee mandate and with the hard work of all of our volunteers and our office manager David Rosenblun-Bourdieu.

The 2014 Summit, Hike ON Speed is a coproduction of the Guelph Hiking Trail Club and their hard working volunteers and Hike Ontario. The site for the 2015 Summit is undetermined as of this writing. The 2016 Summit will be in Perth, hosted by the Rideau Trail Association.

### ***Planning and Development Committee***

Submitted by Brendan Zamojc

The planning & development committee has been active in the past year to serve hiking clubs and trail associations across the province of Ontario, and the strides that have been made over the course of the past few years have been continued and extended. The Hike Ontario Insurance and Risk Management Programs' progress, as well as Compass 2020 will be addressed in this report.

The Hike Ontario Insurance Program has been a staple service to Hike Ontario clubs and associations seeking insurance coverage for both general liability as well as director's & officer's insurance. Through these two policies, pedestrian trail organizations are able to protect themselves from the potential liabilities arising from the facilitation of a public hiking trail. This year we did not see an increase in rates from last year. Commercial General Liability insurance was sold to eligible clubs at a rate of \$2.79 per member plus taxes of 8%. Director's & Officer's insurance was sold to eligible clubs at a rate of \$216.72, taxes included. That represents a decrease of \$10.80 on a per club basis.

Over the past two years, the insurance program has become more strict in its definitions and expectations of "pedestrian trail organizations" and as a result has reduced the overall risk born by the insurance program. This has been done by restricting access to the insurance program to clubs that fit not only Hike Ontario's sanctioning criteria, but also the reasonable expectations of activities carried out by a "pedestrian trail organization". This has been done in order to secure our insurance rates and maintain the ample coverage that our insurance provides.

Risk Management should always be considered in its own right, and should be considered seriously by ALL pedestrian trail organizations. It is independent of insurance, and will always remain that way. Risk Management practices are not designed to simply comply with the bare minimum required by insurance warranties. Instead, they construct a method of conducting a trail organization that provides the following: safety for those using the trail, as well as appropriate and timely reaction in the event of an incident on the trail. This is achieved by training (Safe Hikers, Certified Hike Leaders, and Wilderness Hike Leaders) and education (Hike Ontario's Ten Key Elements of Risk Management for Hiking Clubs and Trail Associations, Risk Management seminar by Pearson Dunn). Hike Ontario's Compass 2020 objectives will see an

increase in responsibility for both hiking clubs and trail organizations in the area of active risk management. Trail safety should not be left to the individual hiker.

Compass 2020 is well underway at this point, and a SWAT analysis has been commenced. The purpose of our Compass 2020 strategic planning initiative is to determine the most progressive and sustainable path for Hike Ontario for the next five years. Compass 2020 is being mediated by Ron Hunt of the Rideau Trail Association. The results of this initiative will be presented to the Hike Ontario Board of Director's once the initiative has been completed.

## HIKE ONTARIO MEMBER CLUB REPORTS

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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.

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### *Avon Trail*

Submitted by Karen Hill

Our 2014 Hiking season has been the year of cancelled / postponed hikes with multiple snow cancelled hikes and rained out hikes. But when we are out, we have a good time, with our Tuesday Rambler hikes drawing more hikers than weekend hikes.

Plans are on under way for our 40th Anniversary year starting November 1st, 2014. We intend to mark our anniversary with special floats for 3 Parades, and End to End, Sponsor a Tree Planting along the Trail and, an On the Trail Event that will include varying hikes with a meal offered at the end.

We had a Trail Audit done this year; this audit which is near completion, will add to our assurance that maintenance and trail markings are being done for our hikers and our tourist hikers.

We are in need of more guidebooks, so a committee has been formed to look into this. This new edition will be our 7th; becoming a necessity with our inventory now depleted having sold 500 copies since publication in 2012.

We have continued to network with other groups in our local area...the Field Naturalists, the Huron Perth Multicultural group and the Mental Health Phoenix Survivors group. While we were unable to draw interest in the Mood Walk program, we have shared our Hiking schedule with the new Canadians and those that are part of the Phoenix program.

We have also networked with the local cycling group in an attempt to have more trails developed in the Conservation area watershed. While the UTRCA – Upper Thames River

Conservation authority is best know for operating the 3 Conservation areas – Wildwood, Pittock and Fanshawe lake, the UTRCA actually owns 1800 acres of land in South Perth and North /Central Oxford Counties. They have for the last 10 years leased 100 acres to the Woodstock cycling group and we had hoped the same would be offered to our contingent.

We are very proud of an extensive board walk trail being created through a mature Cedar bush and the ongoing construction, funded from the Perth Conservation Foundation and private donations. Completion of this project will be late 2014. And we are happy to now announce that the Township of Woolwich has backed down from requiring us to supply road signs when the trail is on the Township's roads....as of this Fall, the Township will purchase and install the signs themselves...this has been a two year battle for our trail to continue to meet up with the Grand Valley Trail in the village of Conestogo.

We are still struggling to raise our membership up to 100 members. A lofty ambition for us but one we have in the front of us all the time. Our Board and our members have faithfully worked on trail maintenance, our web site, forming a strategic plan, hosting social events and doing things to increase our members' appreciate of our country surroundings. We have an activity we love to do and love to share it with others. Our continued thanks go to the work done by our own Volunteers both Maintenance and Board volunteers, the Hike ON Board members and committee chairs, and David at the office of Hike ON.

## ***Bayfield River Valley Trail***

Submitted by Dave Gillians

### **Highlights**

- Applied for and was awarded a Great Lakes Community Fund Grant. The purpose of the grant was to engage community groups in the rehabilitation and protection of the Great Lakes and feeder waters.
- Hosted a series of environmentally themed events for Maude Barlow, the President of the Council of Canadians
- Revised and updated the BRVTA website
- Published a 64 page book entitled 'Bayfield Trails and Waters-Cleaning the Lakes Starts with Cleaning the Streams' with contributions from many other regional groups.
- Planted 62 large trees along our urban Heritage Trail
- Added 8 new information plaques with QR Codes on our Sawmill Trail as teaching aids.
- Completed the Taylor Accessibility Trail with asphalt at the beginning of the trail to prevent erosion damage. All five trails are now completed.
- Installed a new main "Trailhead Sign" with maps in Clan Gregor Square. The main meeting place in Bayfield.
- Sold 60 rain barrels and raised \$600 in this promotion.
- Trained 12 new Hike Leaders.
- Implemented a regular, advertised monthly hiking program with hike leaders. Many of the hikes had different themes which attracted many new walkers.
- Recruited new trail maintenance leaders who organized and coordinated major repairs to our 2 nd longest bridge on the Woodland Trail.

- Republished the Bayfield River Valley Trails Guide and installed acrylic holders at trail head sites so that walkers have them readily available.
- Participated in the filming of a 22 minute cable TV program for our location Tuckersmith Communications community channel.
- Received continued financial support from the Municipality of Bluewater

### **Challenges**

- Organization membership continues to decline
- We do not have a full complement of active Board members
- Board succession planning is a concern since the organization has no vice president who has declared a willingness to succeed the retiring president nor are there any non-board candidates identified.
- Relations with one of our main private landowner partners on the Woodland Trail is sensitive at the present time.

### ***Bighead River Heritage Association (Trout Hollow Trail)***

Submitted by Ron Knight

We work diligently to keep the trail in good condition. Only 14 KM in length, our work is a lot less than those of you who must look after several hundred KM. The trail runs along the Bighead River and every Spring the river gives us significant trail changes to deal with. We have the usual fallen trees and garbage to clean up. We have dirt bikes and ATVs to try and discourage from abusing the trail. The emerald ash borer will soon be giving us headaches with a lot of dying trees to identify and remove from the trail. However, these annoyances are far overshadowed by the grandeur of nature around us as we work and walk the Trail during the changing seasons. Our one claim to fame is that John Muir the famous naturalist also walked this area as he worked in the “hollow” for a while in the 1860’s. Happy Hiking!!

For more information, go to [www.bigheadriver.org](http://www.bigheadriver.org)

### ***Bruce Trail Conservancy***

Submitted by Robert Humphreys

Despite many challenges, this has been a good year for the Bruce Trail Conservancy. We continue to move ever onward with our primary mission of the permanent preservation and conservation of land along the Niagara Escarpment. This past year has seen eleven new properties secured, which have added another 3.9 kilometres to the optimum route. The main trail now stands at some around 885 kilometres in length, with 51% of the trail now secured in perpetuity. In addition there is also approximately a further 200 kilometres of side trails.

This year has seen the celebration of Year 3 of our five 50th Anniversary Years. (Our nine BTC member clubs were formed over a five year period.) The Caledon and Niagara clubs have featured heavily in this, this year, by both holding a series of “Sideways hikes” that emphasized their system of side trails. These hikes have been well patronized.

A further cause for celebration in 2014 involved one of our founders, Dr. Philip Gosling, who was appointed to the Order of Canada. This was because of his instrumental work in founding the Bruce Trail.

At the beginning I mentioned challenges we have faced this year. The biggest of these were presented by the ice storm that hit southern Ontario on 21st December, 2013. This did extensive damage to 400 kilometres of our trails, principally in the Iroquoia, Toronto and Caledon sections. Work parties, some involving as many as 40 members were organized, and during the months of January, April and May contributed over 2,000 volunteer hours to clean up the devastation caused and make it safe again. (In February and March our efforts had to be suspended until spring thaw, as subsequent snow falls had buried the damage.)

We look forward to 2015, and beyond, with further trail enhancements planned for Ontario's hiking public to enjoy and experience.

### ***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 were 120 members at year-end. DOC membership now includes family as well as individual membership.

*DOC activities for the year are as follows:*

- 74 hikes and walks
- 19 bike rides
- 5 canoe paddles
- 15 weekend or longer trips
- 8 urban events
- 4 executive committee meeting
- 10 general membership meetings (meetings held monthly except for July and December)

## ***Elgin Hiking Trail Club***

Submitted by Loretta Vaughan

### ***Membership***

- Total: 83
- Letters to be sent out (re: 18 non-renewals); find out why and ask for ideas how to improve membership

### ***Activities***

- Trying to be proactive (re: Risk management)

### ***Issues***

- Waivers using Hike Ontario format to be printed, used and kept (currently not kept).
- A lot of resistance to do this in regards to Trail Maintenance; current Director refuses to do this. Steps being taken to find volunteer to do this for him.
- 5 executives attending the 40th Annual Hike Ontario Summit.
- A lot of trail maintenance has taken place over last two weeks to improve condition of Trail for our End to End hikes in Oct.
- Need to apply for grants etc to fund much needed bridge construction improvements

### ***Concerns***

- still no invoice for our trail insurance.
- aging executive and need to get younger members to help trail maintenance

## ***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. Below is a partial list of activities carried out in the past year.

We have installed a third trail counter to help gather more accurate usage data of the trail. We are entering the second year of collecting data on the first counters and will now be able to compare year over year usage. We did have minor damage to one unit but we were able to repair it at a reasonable cost. In the long run, the data will provide information on Trail usage



patterns 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.

An idea that came out of our 2013 AGM turned into a project call “Communitrees”. This ‘showcase’ native planting project was planted on the Elora Cataract Trailway close to the 1st line in Fergus. The project was conceived and brought to fruition by Carolyn Crozier with help from many volunteers and local organizations. A total of 82 new native trees and shrubs were planted and are being carried for on an ongoing basis.

Carolyn describes Communitrees as a community of volunteers committed to planting a ‘community’ of native trees, shrubs and native wildflowers. The vision and work is to create many small, beautiful and resilient ecosystems.

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 has undertaken a major new signage initiative to improve informational and directional signage along the ECT. A plan was presented to the GRCA and tentative approval has been given. The ECTA will be providing the funding for this project. Planning work will continue during the 2014/15 winter season with a hope to start work in the spring of 2015.

The 2014 AGM was held on Sunday March 23rd at the Victoria Park Senior Centre in Fergus. Our Guest speaker this year was Richard Scott, Senior Planner at Parks Canada working on the Rouge National Urban Park Initiative. Rouge Park will be Canada’s first ever Urban National Park and is situated within an hour’s drive for seven million Canadians. It was followed by a lively Q&A.

Board renewal remains a challenge for 2014-15. Anyone interested can email [info@trailway.org](mailto:info@trailway.org) for more details.

### ***Friends of the Trail***

Submitted by Bill Gray

As I sit and reflect on our accomplishments on this our 10th anniversary, I am torn between feelings, that we have been doing this forever and others that we just got started. The truth is that it has been a wonderful journey. from that original meeting where we got together to express our mutual concerns, to the execution of a business plan, and the formation of a Not For Profit corporation, we have raised significant funds and yes a few blisters but most important we have achieved our goals of creating a ribbon of parkland in Quinte West. The Lower Trent Trail is now an integral part of life in our community providing an accessible and enjoyable recreational facility that was constructed by many willing hands and the huge efforts of our members.

This year saw us complete the Batawa Riverfront section on time and budget. This was our first combined project that involved the City of Quinte West, Lower Trent Conservation and Batawa Development Corporation. There is still some work to be done with the connections to parts of the Lower Trent Trail, but the Riverfront trail is truly a success and if campaign promises go ahead we should see this trail expanded.

Trail maintenance continues to be our major project and although the Maintenance Chair says that things have slowed down a bit we did manage to install new gates at Bernard Long road, making this section easily accessible for us to maintain. The majority of the trail from Glen Ross to Lock road was mowed and the Station Park required weekly grass management a wonderful year for growing vegetation. The signage at Beaver Falls has been installed, and Tom can often be found sitting on the bench here enjoying the solitude. Trimming was minimal this year due to the continued mowing but we are considering contracting brushing some of the more heavily treed areas in 2015. There are two areas of the trail that still require a Limestone topping, we will assess the costs of completing this task and hopefully acquire some grant funding to complete this in 2015-16. The Maintenance chair echoes our feelings when he says we are all getting older and it takes longer to get something's done but we continue to plug away at it. Thanks to all those that volunteer with maintenance please stay in touch.

Membership is currently stable at 75 paid members, but the demographics of an aging membership base are showing a trend towards the down side. This problem is not unique to our organization but one we need to be aware of. Our Goal for this year is to make our membership more representative of the overall spectrum of Trail users, we need more youthful representatives, so if you have a relative or neighbour who likes what we have done, get them involved.

Visit our website at [www.friendsofthetrail.ca](http://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 479; this is a steady decline over the past several years. We also have 28 Life Members.

### **Activities**

Annual Meetings: The GHTA held our Board of Directors Meeting on 26 April 2014 and our 2014 Annual General Meeting will be held on 1 November 2014 at Regent United Church in Orillia.

- Hikes and individual Club Activities: The GHTA nine member clubs host numerous guided hikes throughout the year. Hikes are posted in our newsletter distributed in the Fall, Winter and Spring, as well as on our webpage (<http://www.ganaraska-hiking-trail.ca/>). Highlights of the clubs are as follows:

- **Midland (54):** We had a great winter hiking season with lots of snowshoeing activities. We supported a fundraising event at the Wye Marsh. We have a full schedule planned for the fall season.
- **Wasaga (107):** We had a successful winter season despite the very cold and snowy winter. Members hiked and snow shoed mostly in Wasaga Beach Provincial Park. We had 2 moonlight snowshoe hikes well supported by members who afterward gathered for hot chocolate and goodies. Our large membership is comprised of diverse ages and abilities. We have been trying to accommodate this situation with a regular hike and an Ambler hike every week. In the fall season we will offer a 3rd level of hike for those who wish a more challenging outing.
- **Mad River (9):** The Mad River Club is actively coordinating with Municipal agencies to advocate rail-to-trail campaign and conservancy.
- **Barrie (35):** They have participated with other clubs. They are investigating whether there is a need for a reroute in Spring Water Park. They will also be checking the state of the blazes.
- **Oro-Medonte (38):** Our chapter has been kept active this past winter despite the weather. Outings include the Tiffin Center, Scenic Caves in Collingwood, Awenda Prov. Park, and Blueberry Plains in Wasaga Beach, Wye Marsh, Bass Lake Prov. Park and our local areas. We found an increase this year in the number of X-country skiers on our outings. Our winter schedule also had a Christmas light walk & moonlight walk ski in addition to the usual potluck suppers.
- **Orillia (54):** They have had 2 night walks but with low attendance. They have a general meeting in May. They are going out with other groups. Cleanup of the trails are completed.
- **Wilderness (37):** Hikes are conducted twice a year which include an element of some trail maintenance. There were no bridges that were washed out this year.
- **Kawartha (80):** Our club seems to be growing nicely and a lot of new members are really keen to get involved. For the first time Kawartha Club has pictures on GHTA website, thanks to one of our new members. He also posts stats on our hikes (distance, elevation, speed). Kawartha Club hosted hike leader training course in Peterborough on May 24th.
- **Pine Ridge (92):** The winter schedule had 27 scheduled hikes but 2 were cancelled because of blizzard – like conditions. 2 hikes were designated as “snow shoe only hikes”. Bob Short, our hiking coordinator has been with the club for 18 years and this is the first year where we had to enforce this decision. In total the 25 hikes that were held covered 230 kms. The average attendance was 11.5. Due to the ice storm, there will be quite a bit of clean-up on the trails this year for the Pine Ridge Section of the Ganaraska Trail. On Wednesday April 23rd 24 of our members observed Earth Day with a litter pick-up along the trail from downtown Port Hope along the Ganaraska river to Sylvan Glen Conservation Area.

## **Risk Management**

GHTA acknowledges that accidents and misadventures can and will happen; people can be injured, property can be damaged, and injured persons can launch a lawsuit against GHTA and/or its individual hiking clubs. To this end, the GHTA has developed a comprehensive Risk Management plan which was based off of the framework provided in Hike Ontario's document "The Key Elements of Risk Management for Ontario Hiking Clubs and Associations." The GHTA Risk Management Protocol, was presented at our 2011 AGM and was endorsed at our Spring Directors Meeting in 2012, and voted unanimously at the 2012 AGM.

## **Challenges**

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

## ***Georgian Bay Coast Trail***

Submitted by Laura Peddie

► *Information not available at time of printing* ◀

## ***Grand Valley Trails Association***

Submitted by Charles Whitlock

### ***Mission:***

The Grand Valley Trails Association (GVTA) is a volunteer organization committed to establishing footpaths within Ontario's Grand River Watershed in order to promote public enjoyment and protection of the natural environment and human history of this Canadian Heritage River.

### ***Trail Information:***

The GVTA became incorporated as a charitable organization on January 23, 1973. The trail was formally opened in 1975 on the first Ontario Hiking Day.

The main Grand Valley Trail is a marked footpath stretching about 275 km between Port Maitland [near Rock Point Provincial Park] on Lake Erie to the town of Alton near Orangeville. The trail is divided into four (4) sections known as Towpath, Carolinian Crest, Black Walnut and Pinnacle.

### ***Report:***

Administratively, 2014 has been a very active year for our association addressing the challenges and opportunities that most clubs face. Maintaining membership levels, board recruitment, up-

dating our strategic plan, hike leadership training, promotion of our presence to the public, the increased use and reliance on our website and social media are all concerns we face.

Paramount to all of these administrative functions the continued challenges of trail maintenance to keep a safe and continuous trail is always at the forefront of our minds and central to our history and continued development.

***GVTA Milestones:***

In May 2013 we launched the new Strategic Plan for 2013-2016. This plan focuses on three specific areas: GVTA Board and Organization, Membership and Marketing and Program and Trails. Specific milestones were identified under each of these three broad areas. The strategic plan continues to be reviewed and updated periodically to ensure that goals, objectives and all initiatives remain relevant, practical and current.

2014 also marked the much-anticipated launch of our new website and online store. Many lessons were learned from the social media workshops held at the HO AGM (2013) in London presented by Ravi Gupta. Social media such as Facebook, Meetup and Twitter have transformed the way we connect, communicate and collaborate with our members and other interested parties. Our long serving webmaster Jamie Hember has retired from this position. We thank Jamie for his hard work and generosity.

On-going maintenance of our tread-way remains a major initiative. Within the past 12 months our trail maintenance directors and their teams provided support for major upgrades on both our Carolinian Crest and Pinnacle sections, including the re-opening of the Jeanette Side Trail near West Montrose. Nick Kuret, Trail Director reports that members of the Carolinian Crest & Black Walnut joined forces with Runner's Den of Paris to replace an old unsafe structure on the blue side trail near the 403 bridge. Two weeks were spent gathering all material, pre-cutting the wood and delivering materials to the work site. A large rock crib was constructed to support the 32 foot board walk over several wet areas. On the day of installation within five hours the project was completed. This area was ready to welcome 80 runners coming to do the annual Phlox Run using the GVTA trail system and the Brant Conservation Area.

From signage to bridge building to re-routes and removal of debris our trail captains and volunteers keep our trails open for all to enjoy.

The 7th Edition of the GVTA guidebook will be available by December 2014. We will use similar paper quality and moisture friendly material that was used for edition 28 of the Bruce Trail Reference Guide. Jamie Hember and Nick Kuret completed an end to end of the trail enabling them to trace the trail on GPS. Despite our mappers getting lost on one occasion for 2.5 hours while establishing the GPS of the trail, the new guidebook is now near completion. The guidebook will include latitudes and longitudes. We will provide a brief explanation on how these coordinates can be used.

The volunteer count for this mammoth task is 15. The guidebook will be dedicated to the many GVTA volunteers that have built, maintained and kept the trail going for past 42 years. We expected the trail to be around for many generations.

***Changes at the Board of Directors:***

Nick Dinka, our president for the past three years has resigned from this position. He will remain on the Board as Past-President. He plans to keep his focus on the GVTA Strategic Plan implementation and on some longer-term projects related to fundraising and external relations. Jim Senn the GVTA current Vice-President has let his name stand as the next President. We welcome Jim to this position.

***Guelph Hiking Trail Club***

Submitted by Mike Curtis

The Guelph Hiking Trail Club had another successful year with a membership of 250 members, varying from families to individuals. Our three main trails, the Guelph Radial Line Trail, the Speed River Trail and the Kissing Bridge Trailway, continue to be well used by members and the general public.

Our children’s hikes continue to be popular with some exceeding 50 participants, including parents, grandparents and children. They are generally 60 to ninety minutes long with snacks to follow.

We have had a committee meeting monthly to plan for the Summit, *Hike on Speed*, with both information sessions and entertainment.

We had had several “special” hikes including maple syrup hikes, full moon hikes, a summer solstice gathering, skating party.

Our *Winter Trek and Tell* shows this year include The Viking Trail in Newfoundland, and tours of England and Africa.

***Humber Valley Heritage Trail Association***

Submitted by Roland Gatti

**Membership**

The total membership of the Kleinburg and Caledon Chapters of the HVHTA is 99 member families. This is an increase of 5 memberships over last year. Our goal is to increase 10% per year, since our local population is growing at that rate.

## **Planned Hikes**

Our yearly hiking schedule is planned annually in the autumn for the upcoming year and we plan one major hiking event every month. Last year we led 15 organized hikes, all on weekends. This year we will expand on that schedule by offering night hikes and midweek daytime hikes attracting the many retired people in our greater area.

## **Trail Maintenance**

Our trail maintenance this past year was significantly different than previous years. Resulting from last December's ice storm we had a lot of fallen trees and branches to clear from our trails. Some of the trails were closed for up to two months while the debris was being cleared. The major blockages were tackled first, and the clean up was completed in June. Our normal maintenance during the summer months, which involves clearing of tall grass on our open trail sections, was twice the normal work due to cool and wet weather this past summer. Fortunately, through active participation, our trails are now in great shape. Additionally we renewed and added trail blazes along our paths to better mark the trails for any casual hikers.

## **Trails Development**

Over the next three years our hiking trails in the Humber River Valley will be almost doubled. The Toronto Region Conservation Association (TRCA), the owner of the Humber River watershed area, has endorsed a plan to develop an accessible trail network from Woodbridge northward to Palgrave. The Humber River Watershed Region is the largest watershed in the GTA, so it makes good sense to develop this area to hikers. Three members of our hiking club have been working closely with the TRCA to plan hiking trails in the valley, for the last three years and the full plan has been endorsed by the TRCA and the municipal government in July of this year. Construction of the new trails will begin in early 2015 and take three years to complete.

## **Environmental Concerns**

A new east-west highway (#413) is planned to connect Highway 400 to the Niagara region crossing the Humber River Valley between Kleinburg and Nobleton. This highway, with all of the construction activities, will put at risk all wildlife in the valley including the Redside Dace which is an endangered species. Much planning has already been done by the the MTO to push forward this planned highway route, but we are attempting to push the route northward to avoid the most sensitive valley area. I am currently involved in an Environmental Study with the

MTO for this highway, to complete the highway corridor within the study area. Hopefully our voices will be heard.

## **Major Challenges**

We strive to increase our membership in order to be a visible presence minimizing developmental impact on our valley lands. As well as providing a natural experience for those living in our urban environment we are trying to preserve our natural environment for future generations before it is all gone.

## ***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, Park People, Highland Creek Community Stewardship Program, Park People, David Suzuki Homegrown National Park, Vanishing Point, Jane's Walks and others.

### **Walks, October 1 2013 to September 30 2014:**

Number of walks – 25 (est)

Total number of attendees – 1330 (est)

Average attendance – 51 (est)

Number of Walk Leaders – 33 (est)

Number of special walks – 8 (est) attendees to follow

### **Big Events:**

See the Salmon Run, September 28, 2014: 675 attendees

### **Workshops and Presentations:**

14 est reaching about 600 people

### **Planting Events:**

RBC, salesforce.com, Friends of Bickford Park, Friends of Roxton Road Parks, Community Canoe.ca

### **Media:**

Ontario Nature: <http://onnaturemagazine.com/>



**New Field Guide:** Unearthing Garrison Creek launch in November 2014

Websites: [www.lostrivers.ca](http://www.lostrivers.ca), [www.thirstycitywalks.ca](http://www.thirstycitywalks.ca)

**Lost Rivers Committee:**

Helen Mills, John Wilson, Richard Anderson, Georgia Ydreos, Ian Wheal, Paula Messina, Wai Yee Chou, Madeleine McDowell, Marguerite des Trois Maisons, Rodney Hoinkes, Ray Nakano, Abe Dyckstra

***Lucan Area Trails Association***

Submitted by Bruce Lamb

**Trail Inventory - Start of 2014**

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.

**Communications**

In addition to the website [www.LucanTrails.ca](http://www.LucanTrails.ca), the Association has a Facebook page at [www.Facebook.com/LucanTrails](http://www.Facebook.com/LucanTrails) with 131 people who have "liked" the page thus far.

**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 \$2,900 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 2014**

We have identified two trails inside the town of Lucan that we hope to complete this year: The Elm Street Park trail (180 m.) and The Benn Drain trail (600 m.). We have verbal approval from the town and a local land developer, respectively, to proceed with these trails and we are currently getting quotations from local contractors to complete the work. The Lucan District Lions Club has agreed to fund the new trail building projects.

The biggest on-going challenge has been finding the time to move the projects forward. Fortunately, a Lions member who is retired has stepped up to provide implementation support.

We have installed a deerCam on one of the trails to gauge the use of our trails - both by people and wildlife.

## ***Maitland Trail Association***

Submitted by Ethel-Mae Seaman

### **Current Membership Trends:**

Current membership is 157 for 2014. Members can now renew membership electronically on the New MTA Web Site.

### **Activities and Successes:**

#### ***Membership Meeting***

Last November's Membership Meeting with travel talk "Penguins, Piranhas and Pink Porpoises" held at the Huron County Museum was very well attended despite the fact that the AGM had been moved to March in 2014.

#### ***Trail Maintenance***

Roger Goddard continues to be the director in charge of trail maintenance and Devon Sturgeon has taken over the job of Trail Ranger Coordinator. The trail looks great.

#### ***Website***

In 2013, the MTA Website was redesigned by Anthony Wilkinson under the guidance of Kathleen Lush (board member). Kathleen continues as the Web Master with Al Sanders assisting. In the year since the new website became active we've seen our daily/weekly/monthly user numbers increase significantly. We interpret this to be an indication of greater interaction and engagement with the community.

Check us out at [www.maitlandtrail.ca](http://www.maitlandtrail.ca)

#### ***Mood Walks***

Ethel-Mae Seaman and Wendy Hoernig spearheaded Goderich being chosen as a participant in the Mood Walks Project. They were able to support Lynn Higgs and Norm Barlough of the Goderich and Clinton branches respectively of the Ontario Mental Health Association by leading the hikes and by Wendy presenting the Safe Hiker Training.

#### ***El Camino Maitland***

The Second El Camino Maitland took place on the weekend of September 27, 28. The hike was a great success attended by 195 people. The weather was amazing. Check points were busy distributing great snacks etc. (see pictures for HO Summit).

### **Current Challenges:**

#### ***Goderich to Guelph (Guelph to Goderich) Rail Trail***

Development of the remaining distance between Goderich and Guelph continues and requests for support continue.

#### ***Port to Point (P2P) Trail***

This multiuse 5 km trail would ultimately link Goderich with Point Farms and serve as a local multi-use extension for the Goderich to Guelph Rail Trail. The P2P Trail Committee in

conjunction with MTA hosted a return hike from Goderich to Point Farms in order to raise public awareness of the trail proposal. Recently the Township of Ashfield-Colborne-Wawanosh (ACW) withdrew support for the trail leaving the trail committee without a necessary sponsor. (see MTA display at AGM)

## ***Oak Ridges Trail Association***

Submitted by Peter Schaefer

**Our membership** count remains at around 600 since the end of 2011. As we are providing family memberships, this may actually represent as many as 1000 members within our Association. These numbers reflect a solid base and they provide us with an opportunity for a broad social network. Nevertheless, it also gives grounds for concern: Our membership numbers do not reflect the rapid growth of the population in our region and the increased length of our trail from around 200 km to 275 km over the past 10 years. We are concerned about an aging membership and the lack of getting younger members join our Association. It is obvious to us that we must better understand the new demographics of our constituency and how we can tap into it. We are also concerned about the threat from having to compete with many other opportunities for recreation time, many of which do not require membership and longer-term commitment. To attract younger members, we may have to seriously consider a change to the nature of trail use for the Oak Ridges Moraine Trail, to perhaps accept mountain bikers and cross-country skiers into our membership.

We enjoy a dedicated **‘core’ of supporters and volunteers**. A strong social cohesion within the ‘core’ has helped ORTA since inception. Including Board and Executive Committee members, hike leaders, special task leaders, trail maintenance captains and crews etc., there are perhaps as many as 120 individuals comprising the regular, reliable support base. However, less than thirty of those will do the bulk of the ‘heavy-lifting’ to maintain operations.

Our greatest weakness is that we are organizationally vulnerable. A ‘Single point of failure’ condition means that ORTA is too heavily dependent on a few key individuals in critical roles. If one task is not completed for whatever reason by a key member, it frequently will remain uncompleted for any length of time. There is a lack of continuity in key positions, something we know is not unique to ORTA. Volunteer exhaustion limits our ability to embark on new initiatives, respond to opportunities (e.g. raising money, spending money) or deal with imperatives (e.g. chapter development, trail maintenance). The ‘core’ is aging and there seems to be a lack of younger members who want to get involved.

**Our hiking program** remains very strong and is the pride of our Association. This year, 345 hikes were led by 35 trained hike leaders. The current dedicated team of certified hike leaders offers a group hike almost every day of the week, with weekends often providing as many as five hikes at various speed and length. We are certainly able to tailor hikes to different abilities and to the changing make-up of the GTA population. Yet, ORTA is always in need for additional hike leaders to “spread the load”, to add even more variety to our hike schedule and to provide more back-up opportunities for the existing hike leaders when personal activities impact their plans. We now have a certified hike leader instructor in Brian Millage who will make it easier for us to access training for ORTA volunteers to become hike leaders.

I am pleased that our Association is participating in **the Mood Walk Program**. In Jerry Wajgensberg we have an enthusiastic point man representing ORTA, and two other ORTA hike leaders, including myself, joined the eight outings this year. Personally, I enjoyed the walks and the people participating. I assume this program will be re-evaluated by CMHA over the winter. I do hope that ORTA will continue to play its part and that we can continue with Jerry providing safe hiker training for the participants. The opportunities for hiking associations such as ORTA lie in the focus placed by the media and by so many political and social groups and potential partners on physical and mental health and the healing powers hiking can provide. Mood Walk is a good start to familiarize us with such programs.

One of ORTA's strength is our excellent **relationship with Moraine stakeholders**, with Regional Forest staff, the Conservation Authorities, private land owners, with the Oak Ridges Moraine Land Trust and with many others. ORTA has developed great credibility because of the responsible way it has embraced the Moraine, developed trails and organized a hiking program that demonstrate respectful and responsible use of the Moraine.

We continue to strive for strengthening these relationships in order to have partners in battling the encroaching development and the ever changing land use rules which threaten the future of our trail, as well as dealing with the constant fluctuation in political interest and will to preserve the Oak Ridges Moraine.

On June 14, 2014, we again held our very successful annual **Adventure Relay**. We attracted over 400 competitors on 32 relay teams which canoed, trail biked and ran in 15 stages over the 160 km from Gores Landing on Rice Lake to the Seneca Campus in King City. We also had over 100 enthusiastic ORTA volunteers assisting with the event, on check point duty, helping to erect lawn signs and monitoring the course during the race. Entry fees for the teams and sponsorship donations provided us again with funds required to sustain the Oak Ridges Trail Association. While being our major fundraiser, it also does assist in creating awareness in the public of our trail and of the Oak Ridges Moraine. In addition, it is a wonderful opportunity for ORTA members to have great fun together and to create some enthusiasm within our membership.

ORTA has an immediate need to more effectively use **modern communication tools** for outreach to build the supporter base, grow active members and grow the volunteer 'core'. We have made some progress this past year in enhancing our website and make use of Pay Pal. In the coming year, much more work needs to be done to develop our data base and its applications.

### ***Palmerston Trail Association***

Submitted by Susan Forbes

2013 was a good year for us. Nothing too exciting. We like it that way.

All our members love our trail. We hear comments how much they appreciate it and that makes it all worthwhile.

1000 trees were planted in the spring of 2013 with the help of Green Legacy and the Palmerston Public School Grade five students. A cold, miserable day but that didn't dampen spirits.

It was reported that starlings and swallows inhabited the bird houses on the trail. No bluebirds as yet.

Our trestle bridges were inspected and one bridge needs some repairs.

A member made up 25 bird house kits for the Palmerston Public School to put together for a project for a classroom. So far 10 houses have been returned to us and put up on the trail.

We did not have too much vandalism. Locks on our gates seem to get snipped off. We had an arm stolen from a gate but a blurb in the local paper about it had results. A farmer found it in his field and realized where it belonged and it was returned to us without a lot of grief.

We received a gift of \$1000.00 to purchase benches.

This spring, (2014) some orioles and a pair of titmice have been seen. The marsh marigolds were in bloom. The wild phlox and lilacs put on a good show. Our swampy area had lots of mosquitoes once again.

This spring 600 trees were planted with the help of the grade 7 and 8's from Palmerston Public School. It of course rained but cleared off for the workers.

We purchased and planted three memorial trees for members who have passed away.

Our fundraising in June, selling hotdogs, netted over \$800.00 for the trail.

We hope to get back into talks with the town about expanding the trail.

A quiet summer & fall. Joggers, people on bicycles and walkers all enjoying the trail.

All in all, we are enjoying, maintaining and improving our tree population on the trail. We think we have a true treasure with our trail. Just steps from town, easy access. A great place to enjoy a leisurely walk or a bicycle ride away from traffic.

### ***Rideau Trail Association***

Submitted by Dorothy Hudson

The Rideau Trail Association has several initiatives underway to reach a variety of groups in our communities.

The Ottawa Club has offered Safe Hiker courses to the public, which have been well-attended, and have attracted many new members. Ottawa has also offered their first ever Accessible Hike, with more to come in future. Ethel Archard from the Ottawa Club participated in the Mood Walks discussion group, and the club plans to support programs initiated by the CMHA.

Meanwhile, the Central Club has offered two successful Family Hikes, and plans are in the works to build on these successes. The local media has been very supportive, with articles and photos pre and post event. The Central Club has also run the Certified Hike leader training course again, with 11 participants.

A ceremony was held to celebrate the extension of the Rideau Trail at the new trailhead in downtown Kingston on June 8. A plaque has been placed front and centre in the most used tourist and gathering park in Kingston.

In July, an event that publicized the Rideau Trail was “Hit the Trail 2014”. Two young men walked the trail end-to-end in 12 days, raising funds for the Boys and Girls Club in Kingston, and raising awareness of the existence of the Rideau Trail.

An on-going concern we would like to bring forward to Hike Ontario is the fact that we are losing sections of our trail because landowners don't want the trail to cross their lands. We have had situations where landowners have revoked permission, or where the property has been sold and the new owner doesn't want the trail on the land. Usually we have to reroute along roads, and trail quality in some areas is becoming an issue. Although we do have a Trail Preservation fund, real estate prices make it difficult for us to consider purchasing key properties that might come up for sale.

Our board of directors is currently without a President, so we are rotating the chair position for each meeting among the board members until the next AGM in the spring.

## ***Rouge Park Trail Club***

Submitted by Diana Smyth

### **Overview of the program:**

Rouge Park's trail program is now operating under the Parks Canada Rouge National Urban Park Visitor Experience team, in which the former Rouge Park Trail Coordinator is now Interpretation Officer/Coordinator. It is volunteer-driven, offering 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 be finishing our 5th 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.

**2014 review:**

Numbers at to end of September:

**Guided Walks:**

General Public Walks: 210

General Public Walkers (new and returning): 1630

Private Walks: 14

Private Walkers: 564

Total Walks: 224

Total Walkers: 2160

Total KM's walked (Av. 5km/outing): 1050

After everyone's miserable winter, Rouge Park's trail team returned to action in March. The park endeavoured to put risk management signs in place owing to the extreme conditions, and we waited for this to put our team back on the trails. Before that, we stationed them at trailheads to greet visitors and alert them to the conditions.

Rouge Park held at least 2 '40 for 40' a walks a month in recognition of Hike Ontario's 40th anniversary.

As many southern Ontario trails experienced, the heavy ice storm base revealed itself in March, making our walks challenging but not putting our visitors off. CHL training and risk management were certainly being activated.

We had a successful summer of strong numbers and the benefit of the temperate summer. June and July totalled over 400 walkers for example in the public program, and we hosted well over 300 walkers in private walks.

We are trained 8 new volunteers in September and October to join the team as well as started making plans to transition the volunteers from Toronto and Region Conservation to Parks Canada supervision permanently.

***Simcoe County Trails***

Submitted by Frieda Baldwin

► *Information not available at time of printing* ◀

***South Common B T Hikers Club***

Submitted by Mike Erison

► *Information not available at time of printing* ◀

## ***Thames Valley Trail Association***

Submitted by Ruth Hoch

Our membership is at 420, up from our long time average of 350.

The increase in membership is partially due to a new way of advertising hikes, using the Meet up and Facebook sites. As of the end of August, 35 new members have joined from the Meet up group. We will continue to use this site.

Trail maintenance is going well. Work has been more challenging than usual due to the excellent growing conditions, but all areas of the trail are in excellent condition.

Our hike offerings are increasing in number and variety. We still offer 300 hikes per year including moderate Mondays, regular Tuesday and Thursday Ramblers, Saturday morning walks, open hikes Wednesday evenings and Sunday mornings. We have also added moon walks, photography walks, longer hikes (4-5 hours) on weekends and 3 even longer 25 k hikes in the past year.

Three members of our over 80 club completed an end to end hike in the spring (120 k) and hope to repeat this feat in the fall.

Eight new hike leaders were trained this year and another training session is planned for November. Three hike leaders were trained to be hike leader trainers. The first session of mood walks training has been completed.

We have a new webmaster and a new Social Media director.

We also have a new Trekker editor who is continuing the great work that Wayne Smith has done. Hikes can now be posted at anytime directly onto the website, instead of just being posted for the quarterly publication of the Trekker. Our membership director is hoping to have the majority of membership dues and receipts completed online in the next year.

We are losing 5 long time board members who have completed their terms of office. We hope to fill the open positions of vice president, treasurer, trail maintenance director and PR director this fall. Our new president continues to work tirelessly to promote and maintain the club.

## ***Thunder Bay Hiking Association***

Submitted by Hilda Postenka

It has been a very busy year for the TBHA, with the publication of our new trail guide, the development of our Risk Management Plan, and our new presence on Facebook.

Over the past year, we experienced some small growth in membership and increased numbers of hikers coming out on our hikes. Our memberships increased from 139 to 142, of which 103



were individual and 36 family. Participation in outings was still strong, with an average turnout of 10 members per event, although we did have one hike with 40 participants! This year 79 outings were scheduled, of which only 8 had to be cancelled due to poor weather. 51 were hikes, 1 was a maintenance hike, 8 were hike/snowshoe, 14 were ski/snowshoes, 3 were paddle, and 2 were bike.

As Hike Ontario Certified Hike Leader courses became available in our area over the past year, many of our Hike Leaders are becoming certified through Hike Ontario, although we still are maintaining our mentorship style of training and this spring we held our bi-yearly local Hike Leader Workshop.

Our club strives to vary the hikes we lead on the many different trails in and around the city of Thunder Bay, the north shore of Lake Superior, and northern Minnesota. We offer hikes at each difficulty level every season, although the majority of our hikes are at the intermediate level, and on weekends we try to balance an easier hike on one day with a more difficult one on the other.

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

For more information, access our website at [www.tbha.ca](http://www.tbha.ca), or check out our Facebook page "Thunder Bay Hiking Association".

### ***Voyageur Trail Association***

Submitted by Carole Blaquiere

The VTA completes its year-long celebration of its 40th year in existence. Over the past year we have had many hikes and activities to encourage people to use the trail. Our goal was to revitalize the association and to promote the trail. In this matter, I think we have partially succeeded. There is interest along the shores of Superior to renew existing trails and to create new trails. We stand to have a world class trail to attract hikers from all over the globe.

Chris and I have tried to hike as much of the trail as we could over the year. We began in Elliot Lake and slowly are making our way to Sault Ste. Marie. Along the way we have met many of the wonderful people that are quietly maintaining the trail of promoting it. There are many, many hidden gems along the path although Chris wants to change the name of our hikes from Challenge Hikes to a sunny walk in the woods. Rest assured we will be going north in the upcoming years.

One of the reasons that we led these hikers was to promote the 40th anniversary of the Voyageur Trail. Other events included the 40 km hikes and the photo contest. I believe 5 people achieved the 40km challenge; one Patrick Capper did it in 4 days. Steve will be contacting those folks. The photo contest generated many fantastic pictures and I am happy that Joanie and

Gary agreed to judge them because I could not have picked one over the others. I am pleased to announce the following winners.

### ***EAST***

Winner (1011) Todd Black Iron Bridge Trail Section OVERAL WINNER

Honourable Mention (1023) Dieter Ropke Near the Thessalon River

Honourable Mention (1007) Todd Black Rock Lake Overlook

### ***CENTRAL***

Winner (1061) Dieter Ropke Red Rock Trail

Honourable Mention (1017) Todd Black Carpin Beach Road Access Point

Honourable Mention (1062 ) Dieter Ropke Red Rock Trail

### ***WEST***

Winner (1070) Sheri Minardi Near the Pictographs

Honourable Mention (1022) Nicole Dube Halfway Lake, Pukaskwa

Honourable Mention (1077) Sherri Minardi On the Pictograph Trail

The pictures are being shown...

Other achievements over the past year include development of new trail loops both in Rosspoint and in Pic River and a group in Marathon that has been working on an area west of the Little Pic River. A new reroute is in the make between Elliot Lake and Blind River and another one has been completed just outside of Sault Ste. Marie. THE Kinghor Trail project continues to move ahead and of course Marathon is forging ahead with a planned trail all the way to Neys Provincial Park.

At the association level, the new edition (4.1) of the guidebook has been completed and is in circulation and we have completed the Risk Management Plan. We have decided to partner with Backroads Maps instead of trying to sell GPS maps. Backroads has the capacity to stay on top of technology. I believe that the new edition of the Backroad Maps for our region will have the updated trail information. For the next year I plan on working on a new strategic plan, a committee is slowly coming together and we will hopefully have some help from the Ontario Trails Council, an organization that we have recently joined. The trail information will be updated in the OTC website soon.

### ***Waterloo 55+ Seniors' Hiking Club***

Submitted by Raymond & Liz 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 and well supported.

We do not create trails or maintain trails. We use existing trails and have about 90 tracks on file.

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

These are associated with safety, liability, risk management etc. HF is one of the largest hiking organizations in the world and operates worldwide. Our club's coordinators are members of HF and each of them have over 80 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](http://www.hfholidays.co.uk) or email Teachers' Travel at [info@teacherstravel.co](mailto:info@teacherstravel.co) in Toronto).

The number of club members is capped at 50 and there is usually a small waiting list. There are no names on the waiting list at this moment. Members pay a small subscription, enough to pay for membership of Hike Ontario and Hike Ontario's insurance plan. This year's subscription was \$10 p.p.

Hike participation in 2013 was good. The average attendance was 15 (max. 35, min. 6).

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 GPSs with the track of the day loaded. There has been no difficulty making a special assessment to buy new GPSs for the club. However, most of our members like to be led. We encourage members to use a spare GPS and hike with the leader of the day. This is working well.

This year we have formalized a risk management plan that has been sent to Hike Ontario. We congratulate ourselves.

## ONTARIO TRAILS COUNCIL REPORT

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Hike Ontario is a member of the Ontario Trails Council. This organization represents the trails community which has three sectors green (non-motorized – pedestrian, equestrian, mountain bike), gold (motorized – ATVs, snowmobiles, dirt bikes, etc.) and blue (portage trails). Some Trail Associations belong as well and the Ontario Trails Council encourages this as they reached the end period for their Trillium Grant and this has created serious shrinkage in their revenue resulting in a downsizing of their operations. They have tried to respond by offering courses but registration numbers to date have been less than was hoped for. Patrick Connor, their executive director, is now working on a half time basis and operations are somewhat curtailed due to limited finances.

Patrick has worked tirelessly to promote the O.T.C. and partnered with projects that will keep it viable. If your trail association or hiking club has extra revenue (from cost savings in insurance or from running Hike Ontario courses) you may wish to support the O.T.C.

The O.T.C. was a partner in presenting to the government in the hearings of last year and their goals are generally similar to ours to create and maintain sustainable trail systems across the

province. Since they represent other trail users which have organizations providing professional staff, we need to advocate within this group to ensure fair time for pedestrian trail concerns.

The Ontario Trails Council will have their annual conference at McMaster University in June of 2015.

Hike Ontario would like to have a consistent representative to the O.T.C. If you are such a person, please contact Tom Friesen.

## VIRGINIA JOHNSON AWARD

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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. The winner of this award is Diana Smyth, our 2013 – 2014 Certification Chair.

Diana is a worthy recipient because she demonstrates the characteristics of organization and vision to create a team of people and institute processes in the creation of the Hike Ontario Certification Administration Manual. A great volunteer organizer and extremely able chairperson, Diana used Survey Monkey tools to help us organize and track dozens of courses that took place this past year. This was particularly important during the Mood Walks project as well as to set us up for success with the Seniors' Hike Initiative for the coming year.

While working at Rouge Park in the midst of its transition to Canada's first Urban National Park and training as a Toronto Police Auxiliary officer, Diana managed to create and test drive the manual as well as teach numerous courses. We will miss her engaging manner in chairing meetings but know that she will stay engaged as a committee member and Hike Ontario Instructor.

Congratulations Diana!

## VOLUNTEER OF THE YEAR AWARDS

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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 2013-2014 VOLUNTEER OF THE YEAR AWARDS ARE:**

#### **Jim Hoare, Guelph Hiking Trail Club**

Jim has been with our Club for over twenty years and has continuously volunteered to assist on work parties during all seasons. He maintains a loop section of our Trail 'The Starkey Loop', single-handedly. When there is a need, Jim is always there.

**Submitted by:** Michael Curtis  
Guelph Hiking Trail Club

### **Wayne Smith, Thames Valley Trails Association**

I would like to recommend Wayne Smith for Hike Ontario's volunteer of the year award for his tireless work in promoting TVTA as the trekker editor, hike leader and trail maintenance worker.

Wayne has been Trekker editor for the past several years and has spent countless hours redesigning the format, coordinating with the website and creating an interactive calendar so hikes can now be posted at any time, not just 3 months before the date. He created a photo contest for our 40th anniversary last year and encouraged members to display their photographs and vote for their favorites. We now have a wonderful set of photos to use for PR purposes. Wayne is one of our most active and enthusiastic hike leaders, introducing weekly summer Wednesday evening and Sunday morning open hikes to encourage new members. He also added weekly 4-5 hour hikes this year and participated in the Meetup program, adding Meetup hikes to his repertoire. He lead so many hikes this summer that he lost weight, before he set off to do the Camino. He and his wife Mary work diligently to maintain their section of the trail, scything, brush cutting and lawn mowing as necessary. He initiated the ambassador program and recruited a member to contact, welcome and mentor new members to the club.

Wayne's energy, creativity and enthusiasm are unsurpassed and we appreciate all the effort he puts into being part of the TVTA team.

Thanks Wayne!

**Submitted by:** Ruth Hoch  
Thames Valley Trail Association

### **Robert Groves, Rideau Trail Association**

On Behalf of the Rideau Trail Association I would like to nominate Robert J. Groves from Lanark Ontario, for the Hike Ontario Volunteer of the Year Award.

Robert just stepped down from the position of president of the Association after 3 years of effective Leadership. During his term he was very active and interactive, where he continually visited each club's AGM annually. He also drove to attend other events in an attempt to meet as many members as he could. He attended Hike Ontario for the last 3 years even last year when he was ill. He has a wonderful non judgmental personality and a vivacious sense of humour that puts most people at ease on first interaction with him.

In April of 2013 while attending a Kingston club event on Foley Mountain, he sustained a Tick bite which after vague symptoms for over a year he was finally diagnosed with Lyme Disease. He continued to lead the Association for a full year of illness, which demonstrates his commitment and dedication.

Robert has many interpersonal attributes, he is sympathetic and empathetic, and he is a good listener. He also has a positive outlook on life and is very resourceful. He was especially effective in his work on

marketing and communication. Robert is truly a person with vision which is needed to sustain an Association of over 40 yrs.

Robert also took on hike leading responsibilities this last year and was only thwarted by his succumbing to Lyme.

We were truly lucky to have him as our Rideau Trail Association President, and we will continue to look to him as an inspirational leader and our continuing friend.

**Submitted by:** Sharen Yaworski  
Rideau 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.**



**“I think that I cannot preserve my health and spirits, unless I spend four hours a day at least — and it is commonly more than that — sauntering through the woods and over the hills and fields, absolutely free from all worldly engagements.”**

***--Henry David Thoreau***





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