

# Along the Trail

THE NEWSLETTER FOR THE FRIENDS OF THE MOHAWK-HUDSON BIKE-HIKE TRAIL

## EMS honored for trail work

Parks & Trails New York selected the Eastern Mountain Sports Mohawk Commons store in Niskayuna as the winner of its 2010 Corporate Partnership Award for its multiple years of financial and employee support of the clean-up and beautification of the Mohawk-Hudson Bike-Hike Trail.

"We are very excited to have our efforts recognized with the Corporate Partnership Award," said store manager Matt Sims. "We have enjoyed working with Howard (Halstead), the Friends of the Mohawk-Hudson Bike-Hike Trail, and the Schenectady Chapter of the ADK on numerous projects that have improved the experience of everyone who uses the trail. We would like to also recognize the hundreds of members of the community who have participated in these projects by either volunteering their time or participating in our raffles to raise money for the projects we have completed."

The award is one of five Greenway and Community Trail Awards presented biennially to recognize the leadership, creativity, and donation of time, talent and materials behind many of New York's trails.

## Work on trail underway

### Project to rebuild Mohawk-Hudson Bike-Hike Trail in Schenectady to be completed by October

After years of delay, work to resurface the Mohawk-Hudson Bike-Hike Trail in the city of Schenectady has finally begun.

Work began on March 1 to rehabilitate four miles of trail in Schenectady. The project stretches from Balltown Road in Niskayuna to Washington Avenue in the city of Schenectady. The trail will be closed while the work is in progress; no detours have been posted at this time.

Federal stimulus funds from the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act are paying for the \$1.2 million project. In addition to milling the existing asphalt surface and constructing a new 10-foot wide trail, the project also includes drainage improvements and the installation of new signage to help trail users navigate the on-road portion of the trail (from Jay Street to Washington Avenue).

The project is slated to be complete by the end of October. One Canal Corporation official said trails typically have a life span of about 20 years.



Photo by Howard Halstead  
The trail as seen from its intersection with Seneca Street in Schenectady.

The town of Niskayuna is also repaving another part of its trail, from Balltown Road east toward River Road. Be on the lookout for temporary closures in the area.

## Get in touch

Write to Friends of the Mohawk-Hudson Bike-Hike Trail at 141 Willowcreek Ave., Schenectady, NY 12304 or e-mail [mhbway@yahoo.com](mailto:mhbway@yahoo.com). We're online at <http://www.mhbht.org>.

## Kids wearing helmets can get a free cone

Kids caught following bike-hike trail rules (and New York State law) by wearing a helmet could be rewarded with a certificate for a free single scoop ice cream cone from Stewarts Shops.

The Canalway Trail Ambassadors will be out on the Mohawk-Hudson Bike-Hike Trail again this year, and some of them will be on a special mission: they'll be looking for kids wearing their helmets and practicing good trail etiquette. If an ambassador catches a child being a responsible cyclist, they could get a free cone. Parents are also encouraged to wear helmets to set a good example.

What does it mean to have good trail etiquette? All cyclists, young and old, should:

- Keep to the right of the trail
- Pass other trail users on the left
- Don't wear headphones
- Call out "On your left" or "Passing," or use a bell when passing

Also remember, if you are walking a dog, please keep your pet leashed and pick up after them.

Many thanks to Stewarts Shops for providing the ice cream cone certificates for this program!

## Ambassadors program growing

The Canalway Trail Ambassadors program kicked off in 2008 with a two-month pilot in the Town of Niskayuna. Ten ambassadors rode 58 patrols, providing directions, mechanical advice and other assistance to a dozen trail users.

In 2009, the program grew to cover the Mohawk-Hudson Bike-Hike Trail in the City of Schenectady, the Town of Rotterdam and the Town of Colonie. Eighteen ambassadors undertook 260 patrols, providing direct assistance to 24 trail users.

In addition, ambassadors participated in the 2009 Trail Count to document the number of users at different points along the trail (see article below).

If there is enough interest this year, the program could be expanded farther



into Albany County. Right now, no ambassadors are regularly riding on the section of trail that runs from Waterford to the Corning Preserve.

— Gillian Scott

### How to help

If you're interested in helping the Canalway Trail Ambassadors, contact volunteer coordinator Gillian Scott at 372-8478 or send an e-mail to [adklookout@verizon.net](mailto:adklookout@verizon.net).

If you'd like to help fund the program, donations are gladly accepted. It costs approximately \$20 to get each new ambassador ready. Checks, made payable to Parks and Trails NY, can be mailed to:

**Friends of the Mohawk-Hudson  
Bike-Hike Trail  
141 Willowcreek Ave.  
Schenectady, NY 12304**

Be sure to write "Canalway Trail Ambassadors" on the memo line.

## Volunteers efforts help to keep the trail clean

Work crews from the Friends of the Mohawk-Hudson Bike-Hike Trail, from Union College and from a local Boy Scout troop have been among those out on the trail this year picking up trash, cutting back brush and making other improvements. These photos represent just a portion of the work that has been completed.

**1.** On March 27 and 28, Boy Scout Joseph Rynasko spearheaded a shoreline cleanup along the bike trail near Shaker Creek in Colonie as part of his Eagle Scout project. With the help of about 40 volunteers from Troop 279, 36 bags of trash and 26 tires were pulled from a half-mile of trail. The



second part of Joe's Eagle Scout project was a water chestnut pull at the Colonie Town Park. He'll also be producing a public education sign for the town park to raise awareness about littering and invasive species.

**2.** Canalway Trail Ambassadors gathered at Schenectady County Community College for the Canal Clean Sweep on April 17 to clear trash from along the bike-hike trail. They gathered 16 bags of garbage and a handful of tires during the annual event.

**3.** Students from Union College helped Professor Andrew Morris and other volunteers clear brush around Historic Lock 23 in Rotterdam on May 22. Morris has been working at the lock for several years to increase its visibility from the trail and from nearby Rice Road, to study its history, and to restore it. Volunteers from the Friends of the Mohawk-Hudson Bike-Hike Trail and from the Schenectady Chapter of the Adirondack Mountain Club returned to do more work on National Trails Day on June 5.

Interested in helping with future clean-ups? Contact Gillian Scott at [adklookout@verizon.net](mailto:adklookout@verizon.net).



## Trail Count reveals most popular spots on the bike-hike trail

The Friends of the Mohawk-Hudson Bike-Hike Trail and the Canalway Trail Ambassadors took part in the Trail Count 2009 sponsored by Parks & Trails NY. Volunteers counted trail users at peak weekday hours at four different locations over six weeks. Data gathered was used to extrapolate overall trail usage.

The results: Lions Park is the most heavily used of the four entrance spots studied, clocking in with an estimated 173,927 annual users. The Schenectady County Community College trailhead had an estimated 105,869 annual users; Colonie Town park 95,471; and Kiwanis Park in Rotterdam 56,715.

The study also revealed that 53 percent of users are bicyclists, 30 percent are walkers, 12 percent are joggers and 4 percent are inline skaters.

### Other local news:

- Work to replace the bridge to Niska Isle off Rosendale Road in Niskayuna began this year. State DOT crews are constructing a new bridge next to the existing one; when it is complete, the old bridge will be demolished. Plans initially called for an at-grade crossing with the Mohawk-Hudson Bike-Hike Trail. These were later abandoned and the new bridge will, like the old one, pass over the bike-hike trail. Please use caution near the construction zone.

- The final design for a bike trail stretching from Central Park in Schenectady into downtown was presented in February. The \$700,000 plan calls for a paved, lighted path to run through Vale Cemetery and Park. The project will also improve drainage in the cemetery to help protect historic graves and will include the installation of security cameras. An on-road portion of the trail will include a two-foot buffer to separate users from traffic. The work is funded through a state intermodal transportation grant. (Daily Gazette, Feb. 1, 2010).

### Regional trails news:

- Fulton County officials are hoping to use a \$1 million grant to extend the FJ&G Rail Trail 3.6 miles to Fonda and the Mohawk River. The trail currently



A kiosk with benches now looks over the Mohawk River at Blatnick Park in Niskayuna. Bald eagles have been sighted nearby — what a great spot to sit and watch for them.

Photo by Howard Halstead

- ends at an industrial park on Union Avenue in the town of Johnstown after running 8 miles south from Route 349 in Mayfield and through Gloversville. (Daily Gazette, May 23, 2010).

- The Zim-Smith Trail in Saratoga County was awarded \$838,000 in federal stimulus funds. The money will be used to build two miles of trail from Eastline Road in Ballston to Oak Street in Ballston Spa. This is in addition to \$550,000 provided by Saratoga County to build a section of trail on CP Rail property in Ballston Spa. Once completed, the trail will stretch for nine miles from Halfmoon to Ballston Spa. (Daily Gazette, September 10, 2009)

- The Spring Run Trail in Saratoga Springs was also selected to receive federal stimulus funds. The \$1.5 million grant will pay for construction of a one-mile paved trail from downtown Saratoga Springs, through Ten Springs Woods and Excelsior Park, ending near Exit 15 of the Northway. The project has been in the works for about a decade. Eventually, Saratoga PLAN wants to connect the trail to the Bog Meadow Trail off Route 29. (Daily Gazette, October 30, 2009).

- Albany County announced in January that it bought a 9.3-mile section of former rail line from Canadian Pacific Railway. The \$700,000 purchase was funded with grants from the state Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation and Scenic Hudson. The rail line runs from Voorheesville to the Port of Albany and will be used to create the Albany County Rail Trail. The cost of developing the rail trail will be

approximately \$7.8 million. Funding sources are still being researched. (Times Union, January 22, 2010)

- The town of Halfmoon received \$200,000 from the state Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation to build a second segment of the Champlain Canal Towpath trail. The towpath will be cleared from Brookwood Road south and stone dust will be put down. The town had previously cleared the old towpath from Brookwood Road to Upper Newton Road. (Daily Gazette, June 25, 2009)

- A feasibility study for a hike/bike trail along Geyser Road in the city of Saratoga Springs determined that the 1.8-mile trail would cost approximately \$1.58 million. The paved trail would extend from near the Milton town line to Route 50. Milton is building sidewalks on its portion of Geyser Road and the trail would connect to those. (Daily Gazette, July 23, 2009)

- The town of Granville was awarded \$30,800 from the Adirondack/Glens Falls Transportation Council for improvements to 6,600 feet of rails to trails trail in October 2009. The council will be making \$200,000 in funding available each year through its Make the Connection program.

- The town of Elba will study the feasibility of replacing the railroad tracks along the Adirondack Scenic Railroad between Lake Placid and Saranac Lake with a bike trail. The state Department of Transportation owns the tracks, which are listed on the National Register of Historic Places. (WNBZ.com)

Friends of the Mohawk-Hudson Bike-Hike Trail  
141 Willowcreek Ave.,  
Schenectady, NY 12304

*Find us online at  
<http://www.mhbht.org>*

## Friends of the Mohawk-Hudson Bike-Hike Trail

Our mission: To develop through public education and stewardship the historical, recreational and economic opportunities of the Mohawk-Hudson trail.

The Mohawk-Hudson Bike-Hike Trail is a multi-use trail located along the Mohawk and Hudson rivers in Albany and Schenectady counties. The trail is part of the NYS Canalway Trail System and the Hudson River Valley Greenway Trail System.

The Friends of the Mohawk-Hudson Bike-Hike Trail works to ensure the long-term success of the trail and related trails. This includes integrating the Mohawk-Hudson Bike-Hike Trail as a key-stone, forging a link among three major state trail corridors: the Erie Canalway Trail, the Hudson River Valley Greenway Trail System, and the Champlain Canalway Trail. When completed, the Canalway Trail will span over 500 miles, making it one of the longest multi-use recreational trails in the country.

### WE ARE ACTIVELY SEEKING VOLUNTEERS!

We are looking for local people interested in participating in planning for the future of the Mohawk-Hudson Bike-Hike Trail and/or in improvement projects along the trail. To become a member of the Friends of the Mohawk-Hudson Bike-Hike Trail, complete and return this form to:

**Friends of the Mohawk-Hudson Bike-Hike Trail**  
**141 Willowcreek Ave.**  
**Schenectady, NY 12304**

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

E-mail address: \_\_\_\_\_

**To make a contribution to the Friends of the Mohawk-Hudson Bike-Hike Trail, write a check payable to Parks and Trails New York (PTNY).** PTNY is the fiscal agent for the Friends of the Mohawk-Hudson Bike-Hike Trail, and a non-profit, tax-exempt organization under IRS code 501(c)(3). Gifts may be tax deductible. Donations of \$25 or more made by current or retired GE employees are eligible for matching.