



Friends of Webster Trails

FWT Newsletter - Fall 2016

Yellow Trail at Four Mile Creek Preserve is Open



*Bridge Project Leader and Eagle Scout Taran Bauer Cutting the Yellow Trail Ribbon (H. Von Gehlen photo)
More details inside this issue*

Upcoming Events

11/12 – Hot Cocoa Hike (7-9 PM) Four Mile Creek Preserve (see website for details and sign up info)

11/14 – FWT Annual Meeting (7-9 PM) Webster Parks and Rec Center

President's report – Shari Gnolek

"Dream big, work hard, stay focused, and surround yourself with good people."

In the Spring newsletter I outlined the goals that FWT adopted for 2016. Now that Fall is here and the bulk of our work is done for the year it would be easy to look back at those goals and focus on those we didn't meet. Instead, I am very proud of what FWT has accomplished and believe that the saying "Dream big, work hard, stay focused and surround yourself with good people" sums up our year in a nutshell. We set our sights on some

pretty ambitious goals and the hard work of many dedicated FWT volunteers made many of them happen. So where did we succeed?

Our primary goal, and the main focus of FWT, is one that most people might never detect if done well – maintaining and improving existing trails. Have you noticed that a portion of the red trail at Whiting Road Nature Preserve is a little less slippery? Maybe not, but a steep area was re-routed and when winter comes you might! If you've recently walked from the Big Field at Gosnell down to Vosburg Hollow, or up the Meadow Trail, you've travelled over new trail sections that are much more manageable for both hikers and mowers. In late summer the growth along the Hojack Trail got a 'haircut' so that the trail was more passable and visible, especially near road intersections. These are just a few examples of the 'typical' types of improvements suggested by trail stewards that were made during trail work days or by volunteers on their own time. Also, since Spring three new people have volunteered to be trail stewards; Pamela Kincheloe (Bird Sanctuary Trail),

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Ellen Mallery (Hojack Trail), and Bill Mead (Midnight Trail). Trail Stewards are the backbone of our trail maintenance efforts and it's wonderful to see new volunteers taking on this role. We also continued efforts to contain invasive species and enhance native habitats as planned through Habitat Committee work days and by dedicating the July work day to habitat preservation tasks.

We met the two goals related to new trails; Build a 'piece' of new trail in an existing trail system and plan a new trail with the intent to build it in 2017. A half mile section of trail was added to the Four Mile Creek preserve and with a bridge and boardwalk in place this trail is now officially open for business. It took two long, hot workdays and the completion of two Eagle Scout projects to make this happen but the added section (marked as the Yellow Trail) is a wonderful addition to the existing 2.15 miles of trail at Four Mile Creek. The new trail project selected and planned for 2017 was not on our radar when we started the year but came to our attention from community members passionate about this wooded area. The short Hickory Bark trail, located just north of the library along Route 104 had been built when the plaza expanded but was languishing without a trail steward or a defined purpose. Jeff Darling has been championing an effort to gather ideas and make this area shine in 2017, and is working with library staff, community members, and town officials. The poison ivy in this area is being treated this Fall so that their plans can be implemented in the Spring. These plans include space for the library to conduct outside classes and more prominently advertise Webster's Trails within the library, and the library staff is excited to help make this happen. If you've been hiking the trails, or reading the Webster newspapers you can't miss all of the work that was done by Scouts this year in conjunction with FWT. Eight projects were completed under Stephen Padgett's guidance as part of our goal to sponsor and support service projects for Scouts and community groups.

We've built awareness of Webster's Trails and FWT in a number of ways. We now have an updated (and more manageable!) website under the guidance of Don Schaefer. The FWT newsletter goes out to all FWT members and is published twice a year by John Boettcher, our new Communications Chair. Members of the Board have supported a variety of community events (Community Arts Day, Electronic Town meeting, Town

Employee Wellness fair, Webster Chamber of Commerce meeting). However, we haven't reached out to other town organizations or fully taken advantage of social media by actively promoting our Facebook page, LinkedIn group, or Twitter account. If you are active on social media and have ideas you'd like to share please contact me, we could use some help and inspiration!

There are also goals that we've made only some progress against. We've added some new interest and variety to high use areas through updated kiosk content but had hoped to add other unique trail features. We've supported the efforts to improve the mapping and blazing of trails at Webster Park but that is being led by the County and has been moving slower than we anticipated. We sponsored two open space events, not five as we hoped, and we decided that the annual meeting (November 14th, 7:00pm) should focus on our goals and path forward instead of involving a speaker.

FWT membership has showed modest growth but we were not successful at attracting 20 new people to come out for monthly trail workdays as we had hoped. The core group of trail work day volunteers accomplished a lot in a short period of time, but our average age is a little higher than we'd like to admit so we need to find a way to attract FWT and community members to this activity. Not just because we need the work done, but because this is a fun, flexible, easy way to get involved, make a real difference and see the efforts of your work. I can't count the times that trail work crews have been thanked while out working or gathering in the parking lot at the start of a work day. Interestingly enough, we've even had people who were out for a run, or bike ride, stop and help out during a work day. I think that speaks volumes about how much trail users appreciate the wonderful trails we have in Webster!

Finally, there are some things they we never got to; researching and submitting a grant in 2016, and working with a neighborhood to tie it to an existing trail network. We just ran out of time before we ran out of interest for these goals.

So where does that leave us? We've accomplished a lot to be proud of, but we're going to continue to work hard and stay focused on big goals in 2017. I'm continuously impressed by the wonderful individuals that make up FWT and feel lucky to be able to help maintain and improve Webster's open space surrounded by great people. If you enjoy the trails as much as we do – come

join us – there are lots of ways to get involved no matter how much (or little) time you have!

Yellow Trail Opened in FMCP

A new trail was established in the Four Mile Creek Preserve in the southeast portion off of the existing red trail. Two bridges were built by Eagle Scouts with FWT financing and guidance. With the completion of the second bridge on October 23, a ribbon cutting ceremony was held and the trail officially opened to the public.



Scouts working on FMCP yellow trail bridge (H. Von Gehlin photo)

10th Anniversary for Gosnell Big Woods Preserve

On Saturday, October 8th members of the Genesee Land Trust (GLT) and the Friends of Webster Trails (FWT) gathered to commemorate the 10th anniversary of the establishment of the preserve. The event was originally scheduled for June but was postponed due to inclement weather.

Highlight of the event was a tour of the Big Woods led by Dr. Bruce Gillman, Professor of Environmental Conservation and Horticulture at Finger Lakes Community College who had originally classified the Big Woods as being an old growth forest. During the several hour tour, Dr. Gillman commented on the requirements and characteristics of several of the tree species in the woods and pointed out some impressive examples.

Following the tour, the 20 attendees enjoyed cake provided by Gay Mills, Executive Director of GLT, and then presented FWT with a certificate naming them volunteers of the decade (see below).

VOLUNTEER OF THE DECADE

Whereas the Friends of Webster Trails

*Have been faithful partners with Genesee Land Trust and the Town of Webster
In caring for the Gosnell Big Woods Preserve
Building and maintaining miles of trails for all to enjoy for a decade*

Advocating for the preservation of the natural character of Webster's open space

*Promoting recreation and educational opportunities and assisting the Town of Webster
and Genesee Land Trust in a multiplicity of ways*

*And whereas Friends of Webster Trails have provided invaluable service
In support of the mission of
Genesee Land Trust.*

*On this day, June 11th, with sincere thanks,
The Board of Directors hereby declares
Friends of Webster Trails
Volunteer of the Decade*

Gay Mills
Gay Mills, Executive Director

Erin Cabral
Erin Cabral, Board President

 **GENESEE
LAND TRUST**
preserve. protect.

Membership News – Denise Billsback

We currently have 193 memberships. We are up from 177 in the Spring 2016. It was a warm dry summer this year and lots of people were out on the trails. Your membership enables trail improvement projects like bridges, boardwalks, benches and signage. The holidays are just around the corner. Think about giving a gift membership or donation to FWT.

Our trails are great to walk as the fall leaves start to turn or for snowshoeing in the winter. Think about picking up a Wegmans Passport at Wegmans or at Webster Parks and Recreation. The passports were updated last spring and most of the markers have been replaced. It is a great way for kids to get interested in the hiking in the outdoors.

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Treasurer's Report - Craig Pratt (3/16-10/16)

Accounts

Checking	\$2661.84
Savings	\$6434.02
Petty cash	<u>\$74.13</u>
Total	\$9169.99

Income

Dues/donations	\$1331.32
Pay Pal	\$597.86
Amazon smile	\$11.60
Interest M and T	<u>\$4.83</u>
Total	\$1945.61

Expenses

Boy Scout projects	\$2678.18
Staples	\$11.28
Stamps	\$38
Mower repairs	\$426.57
IRS filing fee	\$39.95
Supplies	\$605.24
Deposit slips	\$11.75
Pamphlets	\$385
Pens	<u>\$171.50</u>
Total	\$4367.47

Fall Trails Report – Andy Frank

Summer 2016 has already come and gone. During that time, seven trail work days were held on the second Saturday of each month. These work days focus on maintaining, improving, and adding to our Webster trails network. This year saw several changes to existing trails, as well as a major addition of new trails. Here are the highlights:

Gosnell Big Woods Preserve:

As trails become used over several years, steep sections can become eroded by feet and rainfall. This is a normal part of trail building. Eventually some of these sections need to be rerouted and the old section taken out of use. Gosnell saw two reroutes this summer. An uphill section of the Meadow Trails was rerouted around the bench to replace a root covered, eroded section. Also, the access trail from the corner of Baker and Vosburg had become badly eroded by rainfall. A new switchback trail was

constructed nearby that is more interesting and easier to climb and descend.



Ron Happ and Alisa Kokx Making Trail Bed

Whiting Road Nature Preserve:

By far our most used park in Webster, Whiting Road receives a lot of attention from our trail crew each year. For 2016, a section of the Red Trail was taken out of service. It was steep, covered in roots, and badly eroded. A new section was constructed nearby that is a more gradual climb/decent.

Another work day was dedicated to the removal of invasive species of plants. These plants, if left unchecked, can be harmful to native plants. Removing them ensures they will not encroach on the trails or local wildlife.



Invasive Plant Cleanup Crew at WRNP

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Four Mile Creek Preserve:

The major project for the summer was creating a new trail in the southeast corner of Four Mile Creek. The new Yellow Trail took two workdays to complete and adds some extra variety to a run, walk, or ride in that park. Two Eagle Scout projects in the form of bridges are constructed on the trail.

Even though work days are completed for 2016, we are always looking ahead. Friends of Webster Trails will continue to plan work days around the needs of our excellent trail system. Consider volunteering for a 2017 work day. The schedule will be posted on webstertrails.org. No special knowledge or skills are needed. We have a very experienced team that will instruct you on what needs to be done. Each day usually has a variety of jobs so it could be a family activity. So, if you are curious about how these trails came to be, or just want to give back, volunteer. Summer 2017 is just around the corner!

FWT Habitat Preservation Committee: Fall 2016

-Norma Platt

The Habitat Preservation Committee has been working to keep our Open Spaces friendly for native species by removing alien invasive plants and re-introducing native plants. Our group meets weekly for light labor, conversation and learning in the out-of-doors.

There was a long hiatus in activity due to the hot weather and vacations, but we were still able to work in the following ways.

We started the season with the annual kick-off – pulling Garlic Mustard along Lake Road north of the Big Woods (east of Pellett Road). The job is much smaller than it used to be because after 5 years, the seed load is down to nearly nothing. We also pulled Garlic mustard along the Bird Sanctuary trail and on the trail from the Gosnell Small Meadow out to Pellett Road. Garlic Mustard is a plant that seeds heavily and will crowd out other important native plants.



Pulling Garlic Mustard along Lake Road

At the perimeter of the Gosnell Big Woods we have two areas that we've cleared of invasive shrubs and replanted with small native tree seedlings. We spent time maintaining the area and fertilizing our plantings. John Boettcher initiated a project planting larger beech trees in this area (with the permission of GLT). He hoped that the larger trees would provide more shade to retard growth of the invasive plants. In spring, he identified specimens and root-pruned them. In October, our Committee moved them to the first rehab area. We will be monitoring the health of the transplants, and their shade potential.



Lee, Dave and Jack Transplanting a Beech

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We have removed nearly all the Autumn Olive from the loop at John Ungar Nature Preserve. We've scattered seed and planting seedlings to encourage Spicebush, a native understory shrub.

We visited Screech Owl and Wood Duck nest boxes for their annual inspection and cleaning. One of them surprised us with evidence of a Wood Duck nest, lined with down, containing egg shells and two unhatched eggs!



Norma and Drew Checking a Nest box

Volunteers who worked on the habitat preservation this year are: Lee Berlew, John Boettcher, Eric Brown, Joe Capolla, Bill Fischer, Sharon Galbraith, Dennis Gent, John Griffiths, Tom Hopkins, Dave Lentz, Tom Nash, Nancy Poeth, Tom Poeth, Jack Sherwood and Drew Yampanis. Thank you all for your company and good works making Webster open space a better place for native plants and animals!

Stewards – Our Eyes on the Trails – J. Boettcher

That is what they are! They adopt a trail and watch for problems. This involves frequent visits throughout the

year. Most times they take care of the little things themselves. The bigger stuff they bring to the attention of the Board and Trail Chair and a work day is devoted to the problem. Quite a commitment these folks make. In order to find out more about our stewards, I came up with a list of questions and conducted interviews with nearly all of them, most over the phone but some in person. My purpose in this was selfish. I wanted to meet and learn more about our stewards. I also wanted to write an article for the newsletter in hopes that this might stimulate some interest among the membership and appreciation for our stewards.

Half of the stewards are individuals who recognized the need and stepped up. In some cases, there were mitigating circumstances such as living in proximity to the trail. In some cases, the steward played on trails in their youth. The other half of the stewards is best represented as families where the children's activities like scouting exposed them to the trails and FWT. In other cases, the parents thought this would be a good family activity, expose the family to nature, and contribute to the community. All strike me as good reasons.

The time commitment and specific activities of the stewards vary greatly reflecting the much different nature of the trails. We are very fortunate to have such a variety of trails in Webster. Most of the trails are a mile or so in length but some are less than a half-mile and others more than five. Some of the trails are easily accessible with civilization a stone's throw away. Others are very remote with no one about if you should have trouble. Trails are sometimes paved or nearly so while others are packed dirt with occasional tree roots. There are trails in park settings and others in fields or forests. Many of the trails are relatively flat but others have considerable and frequent ups and downs to them. Water is a feature on many of the trails with creeks, streams or ponds nearby. Sometimes the trails require bridges. Some of the trails have history or go through areas that are historical. Bearing the above in mind, most of the steward's report spending a few hours each month but it should not surprise you that others spend up to twenty hours per month.

So what do the stewards do? First off they patrol the trail and look for problems. Some of the stewards spend a big part of their time mowing. Then there is clearing

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the trails of fallen trees, vines and encroaching vegetation. Leaf raking and blowing is common fall activity. Litter and trash removal also appears on the list. Large jobs requiring many people or special equipment (chain saw, brush hog, etc.) are brought to the attention of the Trail Committee Chairs and the Board and will be tackled at one of the FWT work days.

What do the stewards like most/least about their jobs? The "most" list includes: everything, nice trails, people's smiles, satisfaction of helping with open space, family time, and time outdoors. The "least" list has: dog stuff, trash, obnoxious neighbors, littering, vandalism, graffiti, invasive plants and poison ivy.

An important component of the job is interaction with people using the trail. The stewards estimate use of

their trails as hundreds of visitors each week but some get ten times more. At the other extreme, there are stewards who have never encountered a visitor on their trail. When encounters occur, almost universally, the user will thank (sometimes hug) the steward for their efforts. There have been occasions where the visitor pitches in on a job. Always there is the opportunity to tell the visitor about the FWT and encourage membership.

Hope this gives you some idea of what trail stewards do. Maybe you are interested in adopting a trail for yourself? If you are curious about the identity of our stewards you can find this on the FWT website under about us/leadership. When you see a steward, give them a thank you.

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Friends of Webster Trails advocates for the preservation of the natural character of Webster's open space lands. We promote through sensible management, education, and low-impact access. We advise the Parks and Recreation Department and assist by planning, maintaining and promoting recreation trails in the Town of Webster.

The Friends of Webster Trails newsletter is published each Spring and Fall

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