

# **ADOPT-A-TRAIL VOLUNTEER PROGRAM**



## **DUTIES & DATA**

**Spring, 2015**

**R. Bruce Donald, President**

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## **Why an Adopt-a-Trail Program?**

- The Farmington Valley Trails Council (FVTC) set up this program 15 years ago to help our 8 towns to cope with continuing light maintenance on the trail system, which includes over 40 miles of completed (paved) Farmington Canal Heritage Trail (FCHT) and the Farmington River (loop) Trail (FRT).
- Provide clean-up services on the trails by removing detritus and trash. If necessary light pruning and clearing of sections may be required to hold back encroaching greenery.
- To act as eyes and ears on the trail, identifying any maintenance problems, actual or potential criminal activity such as graffiti or defacement of property, and to report any such condition, activity or other issue to the proper town authority.
- As a secondary role, to act as informal guides for trail users.

## **Background**

The over eighty miles of the Farmington Canal Heritage Trail (FCHT) and the nineteen miles of the Farmington River Trail (FRT) constitute one of the most picturesque and historic greenways in New England. The Connecticut section “spine trail” from New Haven to Suffield runs fifty four miles through eleven towns and connects with many more biking and walking trails. The FCHT has been designated a Community Millennium Trail under the federal Millennium Trails Initiative based upon its special value to the communities it serves. It is also a major part of the East Coast Greenway from New Haven to Route 315 in Simsbury. The ECG runs 2,900 miles from Florida to Maine. The FRT and 11 miles of the FCHT constitute the Five-Town, 28-Mile Loop Trail, one of the few in the United States.

## **The Farmington Canal**

Encouraged by the success of the 363-mile Erie Canal and looking for ways to more effectively compete with the port of Hartford, a group of New Haven businessmen met to discuss the idea of a canal route from New Haven to the Massachusetts border and beyond. On July 4, 1825, ground breaking ceremonies were held at Salmon Brook Village in Granby, CT. In 1835, the canal was finally completed from New Haven to Northampton, a distance of 84 miles. During its heyday the canal carried a variety of cargo through the Farmington Valley, but was never able to turn a profit. Bowing to the inevitable, the shareholders of the Farmington Canal Co. petitioned the legislature for authority to build a railroad. In 1848 commercial operations on the Canal ceased.

## **The Railroads**

While many factors led to the demise of the Farmington Canal, none was more important than the invention of the steam engine. By the mid-1800's, more than one hundred separate railroad companies operated in Connecticut. The New Haven and Northampton Railroad Co. was chartered in 1846. Dubbed the “Canal Line”, the first section from New Haven to Plainville was completed in 1847, mostly along the route of the canal. By 1850 the line had been completed from Plainville to the Massachusetts border with branches out to Tariffville, Unionville and Collinsville. By the late 1800s, the small private lines were merging with

larger companies. In 1872, the Canal Line was consolidated with the New York, New Haven & Hartford Railroad. The New York, New Haven & Hartford operated until 1969 when it was consolidated with the Penn Central.

### **How Have the Trails Been Built?**

Trucks and automobiles almost completely replaced the freight and passenger rail service of the Canal Line and Central New England, and most services ended by the late 1980s. As rail lines around the country fell into disrepair groups of creative individuals explored the idea of converting abandoned rail beds and canal towpaths into recreational trails and the “rails-to-trails” movement was born. Congress provided funding through the Transportation Enhancement (TE) portion of the Intermodal Surface Transportation Efficiency Act of 1991 (ISTEA) and the FVTC was formed soon after in 1992 to promote and support the conversion. Six town governments in the Valley cooperated in the creation of the trail development committee and in providing the 20% of funds not supplied by federal TE funds. The first sections of the “Farmington Valley Greenway” were paved in Simsbury and Farmington beginning in 1993/4. Raising the 20% matching funds is difficult for many towns as CT has been reluctant to provide any State funding in the past. Much of the trail system is complete with the exception of a 9.1-mile piece running south from southern Farmington, through all of Plainville into northern Southington. As the railroad abandons use of the rails south of Farmington, it is expected that we will be joined to trails already paved from Southington to New Haven, with only a 4.7-mile gap in Cheshire. Southwick, Massachusetts is completed, with only 6 miles of Westfield (much of which will be elevated) and all of Southampton remaining to the north.

### **Why Build Multi-Use Trails At All?**

41.7 completed miles of the multi-use (asphalt surfaced) FCHT bisect Connecticut from New Haven to Suffield. Its sister loop trail, the FRT boasts an additional 10.1 miles. They have proven to be a remarkable success. By connecting 13 towns, they allow point-to-point off-road travel providing a safe system of linear parks that can be accessed at multiple points by both able and handicapped users. The trails serve multiple positive purposes for their communities and the surrounding region. Unfortunately large gaps remain in both these trails.

The case for multi-use trails in Connecticut has been proven. They are used as recreational facilities for physical activity and health, as tourist destinations and sources of economic development, as an abatement of pollution and noise by replacing automobile trips, as a significant community amenity where people congregate and interact, and as a growing form of alternative transportation through commutation. Intermodal opportunities through connections with bus lines and other mass transportation are expanding and are slowly and steadily increasing in use.

- Every dollar spent building multi-use trails returns a multiple of that yearly.
- Immediate successes when built, indicating heavy demand, they attract thousands of users.

- Those local and out of town users add significantly to the economy;
- Residents are overwhelmingly positive about them, communities that have them are more desirable, and properties near trails sell faster at higher prices.
- These repurposed rail corridors are retained permanently as improved community open space.

## Who Are We?

### Corporate Background:

- The Farmington Valley Trails Council, Inc. is a *CT 501(c)(3) not-for-profit organization* founded in 1992 by Preston Reed of Farmington to advocate for multi-use “rails-to-trails” in the Farmington Valley.
- We are now the largest such organization in New England with *1,000 members*. We fully recognize that the political advocacy and economic strength of the organization stem directly from the vibrancy of our membership.
- Every cent (except our very low administration costs) goes to the trails, *we are all volunteers*.
- Spending on construction, maintenance and amenities has averaged *over \$38,000 a year over the last 6 years*.

### Officers 2014-16:

Bruce Donald, **President**, Farmington  
 Jim Cassidy, **Vice President**, Plainville  
 Steve Noble, **Treasurer**, Tariffville  
 Mary-Jane Gately, **Secretary**, Avon

### Directors:

Nancy Anstey, Avon, Barbara Collins, West Hartford, Joy Himmelfarb, Simsbury, Gary Miller, Canton, Scott Myrick, West Hartford, Susan Mitchell, Simsbury, Rich Rowleson, Avon, Al Ryan, Suffield, Dwight Weed, West Hartford.

## What Do We Do?

### Broad Corporate Activity:

- Advocate for the completion of (1) the FCHT (2) the FRT and (3) the ECG in Connecticut.
- Promote the benefits of this multi-use trail system as the 82-mile Farmington Canal Heritage Trail and the 30-mile Farmington River (Loop) Trail.
- Help our area towns through funding trail construction, enhancements and maintenance.
- Build alliances with federal, State, town and advocacy organizations.
- Educate the public by providing maps (10,000 a year), information and events that promote safety and proper etiquette on the trail system.
- Provide up-to-date information on a high quality Website and through timely communications such as a Newsletter and email list.
- Publish papers on trail advocacy, policy, maintenance and safety.

- Hold events like monthly rides, trail-side tables, and our annual Clean-Up Day in April.
- Increase membership and volunteer coordination, renewal and retention.
- Manage FVTC activities requiring assistance from members/volunteers.

#### **FVTC Trail-wide Initiatives:**

- FVTC Maintenance Matching Fund: Recent projects for Avon and Farmington.
- Targeted Funds: Salmon Brook Bridge Fund granted \$70,000 to East Granby for completion of the Bridge. To date over \$300,000 has been passed through to our towns.
- Our Adopt-a-Trail Program helps our eight towns keep the trail clean and safe with over 100 volunteers.
- Rules and Etiquette Signage
- Safety: Handlebar bell Program, Free blinkies, Laser Counter Program
- Painted Center Lines
- Unified Design Policy
- Commercial Signage Standards
- “You are Here” Trail Program
- Trail Ambassador Program
- Boy Scout Eagle Projects (T.J. Taylor, Coordinator)

#### **Maintenance Standards and Schedule**

The FVTC continues to research best practices in trail maintenance and stewardship. Safety is of paramount importance. *We will strive to keep our trails clean and garbage free.* Each town will provide standard maintenance such as mowing, weed control, edging, drainage control, heavy cutting, sand removal, etc. We will provide:

- Trail Sweeping
- Trash Removal
- Light Tree & Shrub Pruning
- Informal Guide Duties

**Trail clean-up responsibilities should be undertaken every two weeks at a minimum** during the season of March through November. We urge you to go out after storms and with more frequency during fall leaf drop periods. Carry some maps and be ready to answer basic questions about the trails.

## **Gear**

The FVTC will provide you upon request with hats and neon “staff” shirts. Additionally, we have garbage bags, trash sticks, and other materials in our storage unit in Simsbury. Please let your Coordinator know if you need anything.

## **Reporting**

Keep your eyes open! It is very important to know where you are on the trail system when reporting. The nearest cross street should be identified and any mile-marker should be noted. Hand held device GPS is reasonably good but still cannot pinpoint your location.

There are three levels of reporting. The first is for an *active* situation requiring immediate assistance in either a criminal or medical emergency. These situations demand both police and/or ambulance services. **In such cases dial 911** and describe your exact location and the situation to the dispatcher. This includes suspicious activity.

Second is a non-emergency police event. This would include any *non-active* report that the local police station would want to know about. Working with police is an important part of ensuring that a trail is safe to use. Areas like trail crossings and parking lots could generate such reports and would include such things as vandalism or the identification of transients. Use your common sense. If you think the police should be notified but it is not an emergency, call the station:

### **Police Station Local Numbers**

Avon: 860-409-4200

Burlington: Troop L Litchfield, 911

Canton: 860-693-0221

East Granby: 860-653-4956

Farmington: 860-675-2400

Granby: 860-844-5335

Simsbury: 860-658-3125

Suffield: 860-668-3870

Third is a maintenance event or “inspection event” that is beyond our stated scope of services. Please report NEW heavy maintenance and any safety concerns i.e. asphalt

condition, fencing falling down, etc. that will not be repaired by our Adopt-a-Trail Volunteers.

### **Maintenance Contacts: Town Level**

Avon: Bruce Williams; 673-6151 – [bwilliams@town.avon.ct.us](mailto:bwilliams@town.avon.ct.us)

Burlington: Scott Tharau; 673-6789 – [stharau@yahoo.com](mailto:stharau@yahoo.com)

Canton: Robert Martin; 693-6863 – [rmartin@townofcantonct.org](mailto:rmartin@townofcantonct.org)

East Granby: Edward Hubbard; 653-6822 – [info@egtownhall.com](mailto:info@egtownhall.com)

Farmington: Scott Zenke; 675-6789 – [zenkes@farmington-ct.org](mailto:zenkes@farmington-ct.org)

Granby: James Klase; 653-8960

Simsbury: Gerry Toner; 658-3255 – [gtoner@simsbury-ct.gov](mailto:gtoner@simsbury-ct.gov)

Suffield: John Cloonan; 668-3280 – [ckoren@suffieldtownhall.com](mailto:ckoren@suffieldtownhall.com)

### **Basic Trail-Wide Trail User Guidelines**

- Please stay on the designated trail, be courteous, and respect the rights of adjacent property owners.
- The flow of traffic on the Trail is similar to road traffic. Always ride or walk single file on the right and before passing on the left alert others by bell, horn or voice.
- Stop, look and listen before crossing roads. Obey all traffic signs and regulations.
- The bicycle speed limit on the Trail is 12 mph.
- All bicyclists are encouraged to wear protective headgear. Make sure your bicycle or other equipment is in safe operating condition.
- Please do not litter. In consideration of others please keep dogs on a short leash at all times and clean up after your dog.
- Report Trail maintenance problems to [see list].
- Report accidents on the Trail directly to Police: Dial 911. Report your position using the mile markers or road names at crossings.
- Motorized vehicles (except wheelchairs), horses and livestock are prohibited.
- The trail is open for recreational use from sunrise to sunset.
- No alcoholic beverages.
- No fires, hunting or trapping.

## **Adopt-a-Trail Volunteers 2015**

### **AVON**

BOB FISH  
DEMETRIOS and CAROL TSAYCOYEANES & FAMILY  
GOLDBERG FAMILY  
BORTOFF FAMILY  
TERRI WILSON  
TEAM LEO of FAVARH, c/o Michael Lawrence  
RICHARD ROWLENSON  
JOHN COWAN  
FAVARH'S LEADERSHIP BRIGADE, c/o Todd Christopher  
MARY-JANE GATELY, Coordinator, [mjmarmee@comcast.net](mailto:mjmarmee@comcast.net) 860-543-1898

### **SIMSBURY**

GREG FISH  
JOE OROSZ  
ED COX  
ART HURST  
ROGER PRESTON  
LYNDA & BILL COOK  
RED STONE PUB, c/o Marc Lubetkin  
THE BICYCLE CELLAR, c/o Dave Bishop  
JAY EVANS  
LARRY LINONIS  
DIANA MOODY  
ROSEMARY & DOLPH FUSCO  
STEVE NOBLE, Coordinator, [steve.cris.noble@comcast.net](mailto:steve.cris.noble@comcast.net) 860-658-4065

### **FARMINGTON/UNIONVILLE**

STEVE AND DIANE NELSON  
UNIONVILLE VILLAGE IMPROVEMENT ASSOCIATION, c/o Mike Festa  
UNION SCHOOL PTO, c/o Kerry Laberge  
DONALD SVENSK  
BICYCLE FRIENDLY FARMINGTON, c/o Ron Goralski  
BRUCE DONALD, Coordinator, [president@fvgreenway.org](mailto:president@fvgreenway.org) 860-202-3928

### **COLLINSVILLE/BURLINGTON/CANTON**

HEALTHY GEARS VOLUNTEERS, c/o Glenn Kohrs  
LEE SINKWICH, coordinator emeritus  
GARY MILLER, coordinator, [garymiller\\_fvtc@mac.com](mailto:garymiller_fvtc@mac.com) 860-690-1008

### **EAST GRANBY/GRANBY/SUFFIELD**

RON DUNCAN  
RON CARLSON  
BECKY MIKUS



GERRY PALMER  
MARYANNE KRAJCIK  
JIM DEVOE  
SKIP ESTEE  
BENGT WENNBERG  
NORM SMITH  
JOHN BLINGLING  
JOHN SUTTON  
DAVE TOLLI  
SCOTT HOHENSCHUTZ  
ED FERRIN  
PATTY SANSONE  
JERRY LEDGER, Coordinator, [jjldgr@ieee.org](mailto:jjldgr@ieee.org) 860-653-3042

**SOUTHWICK, MA**

NEIL DENOWITZ

**KIOSK KEEPERS**

MIKE BEATTY  
JENNIFER DECKER  
GARY MILLER  
MATT GRAEBER  
TERRI WILSON  
JEFFERY DOWNES  
SHARON & PAT DAVIES  
SKIP ESTEE  
JIM WATSO  
RICH ROWLENSON Coordinator, [rrowlenson@gmail.com](mailto:rrowlenson@gmail.com) 860-729-0015

**TRAIL COUNTERS**

DAVID TOLLI  
SCOTT HOHENSCHUTZ