

Firelands Rails to Trails, Inc.

North Coast Inland Trail – Huron County

44 East Main Street Norwalk, OH 44857

www.firelandsrailstotrails.org

419-465-3367



Annual President's Letter, 2018:

I take this opportunity to thank the members of Firelands Rails-to-Trails for financially and personally supporting our trail organization over the past year and years. We have made, together, progress in the building and maintaining of our section of the North Coast Inland Trail in Huron County that has impressed Poggemeyer Design Group, the County Commissioners, and those who watch our progress or use it themselves. I am also grateful to NORTA and to Lorain County Metroparks as primary supporters of our efforts.

Much work has been done this year. Our major projects included the Norwalk Double Arch Bridge headwall repair by Wilhelm Construction, completion of the restoration of our historic Monroeville Depot, repair of the Old Woman Creek bridge railings, the grouting of the Wakeman Rail Road Bridge, and the long-awaited Grand Opening Celebration in Wakeman for the Wakeman East (Paved) Bikeway, the Wakeman Bridge and the final "Blazing" of the Buckeye Trail across Huron County.

We anticipate that within the next year or so the signage for US/Ohio Bike Route 30 will be accomplished by ODOT and we will see, along with every increasing connectivity of the trail, an increase in trail use by runners, hikers, bikers and not just by local folks, but by people from all over. Our partnership with Poggemeyer Design Group will move forward looking for grants and support to pave the trail across Huron County over the next years.

While all of these big things have been moving along, the day-to-day things have been attended to by our core of dedicated workers. Trees and snags have been removed as needed, mowing has been accomplished by our crews, signs have been placed and replaced, bridges and culverts cleared, trail surfaces maintained (with more to do!), and we have planned our activities and paid our bills. Hopefully, our communications have been reaching you and you have been giving them due heed all year, but, more than that, that you have shared the story of your trail with others.

As I finish another year of presidency, I am looking at the future. To me, the biggest challenge to our organization is "passing it on" to others. The future of any organization is found in a willingness to "pass it on" to succeeding generations of members and workers. Passing it on means addressing the challenges of growth, of growing new members in younger life stages to pick up the tasks and have the enthusiasm to build upon what we have both received and done.

One of our sister trail organizations annual meetings was recently attended by Gordon Oney and myself. We listened as the members reflected on the fact that they have 65 members, 65 miles of trail and the average age appeared to be 65. The members see a problem as did Gordon and I. The answer to this comes from a determined and planned program to *purposefully engage* younger members, *mentor them* in their learning and doing our mission, and *empowering them* at the helm of the organization as well as *trust they* will continue the work. I hope to move the presidency to a younger member soon and work on this issue; it is the future of the trail and our association, and is the most important thing that we have to do together. We must "pass it on!" It is as we "pass it on" that we, ironically, will continue to "have it," a trail for all to use with a lasting future.

