

Towpath Times



Miami and Erie Canal Corridor Association

www.meccainc.org

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MECCA Celebrates National Trails Day



New Bremen Mayor Jeff Pape was one of many dignitaries speaking at MECCA's National Trails Day event.

*By Jim Coons
Secretary
MECCA Board of Directors*

On Saturday, June 2, MECCA joined together with the American Hiking Society to hold a National Trails Day event along the Miami and Erie Canal Corridor.

The theme for National Trails Day this year was "Celebrating Fifteen", in recognition of the 15th anniversary of NTD. It is America's largest celebration of trails and the outdoors, with more than 1,200 events hosted by trail and community groups, public agencies, and businesses from coast to coast.

Locally, the Minster-New Bremen walk path was the site chosen to recognize the day, with upwards of 50 people attending to participate. Gathering at the Crown Pavilion in New Bremen, participants heard from New Bremen Mayor Jeff Pape, Auglaize County Commissioner Doug Spencer, ODNR Division of Water Supervisor Steve Dorsten, Southwestern Auglaize County Chamber of Commerce Director Jim Coons, and MECCA Director Neal Brady.

Mr. Spencer summarized the significance of the walk

path by noting that the past is leading us into the future, with historical, cultural and environmental influence.

Also attending the event were Minster Mayor Dennis Kitzmiller, ODNR Division of Water Program Manager Hung Thai, and Village Councilmen from both Minster and New Bremen. Members of the original Walk Path Committee, who oversaw the development and construction of the path from 1994 through 2001, were on hand to celebrate the project and the tremendous use the walk path receives today.

Attendees then enjoyed a hike along the three-mile walk path on the Miami and Erie Canal towpath from the Crown Pavilion south into the Village of Minster. This section of the canal towpath is one of four hikes comprising the "2007 Towpath Trek" program organized by MECCA with support from The Dannon Company. Folks who hike all four specified trails are eligible to receive a special "Towpath Trek" pin from MECCA.

For more information about the American Hiking Society, visit their website at www.americanhiking.org.



Founding Trustee Recognition

Founding MECCA Trustee Nick Van Schoyck (left) receives a pen and pencil from MECCA Director Neal Brady. The set was fashioned from wood taken from the original Six Mile Aqueduct. The gift was given in recognition of his leadership and vision for the Miami and Erie Canal and MECCA was presented at the 2007 St. Marys SummerFest. Nick is retired from the St. Marys Area Chamber of Commerce.



BUCKEYE TRAIL ASSOCIATION "TRAIL CREW" -- (R to L) On Blade: Roger Myers, Herb Hulls, Rich Adamson. Middle: Les Weidenhamer, Jim Runk, Elmer Layman, John Rethman. Driver: Susie Hulls

BTA Clears More Towpath

*By Rick Adamson
Head State Trail Coordinator
Buckeye Trail Association*

During the last week of June the Buckeye Trail Association's Trail Crew worked on various portions of the Buckeye Trail along the old abandoned Miami and Erie Canal Towpath for a record 8 days of work. On the first days, the crew extended the trail over 3.0 miles on the Towpath in Henry County. The work started east of Napoleon clearing out hackberry trees from the trail base. As the hackberry trees have an aggressive tap root, the use of a small dozer which came in very handy and assisting in the work.

Later in the week south Paulding County, trail clearing work continued and 3 additional miles of Towpath was opened. A local farmer hosted The Trail Crew with a camp site in a mowed grassy field directly beside his home. Lunch was served by the Oakwood Arbor Society one day and early one morning breakfast was served by our campsite host. Fresh eggs and milk were served by the owners who just hours before gathered the

eggs and milked the cows. How's that for freshness? Besides the food donations by local residences other businesses donated ice and water to keep the workers hydrated and nourished. In supporting the project, a private business owner donated all the needed culverts of various sizes for Paulding County Towpath Trail improvements. One specific culvert measured 24 inches in diameter by 20 feet long was installed to allow access on the trail. Stay tuned as progress continues southward and eastward from Napoleon.

At one point, Steve Dorsten of the Ohio Department of Natural Resources and MECCA Executive Director Neal Brady assisted in identifying an area which was strange in design to the Buckeye Trail Crew. They identified it as a lock where there was also a loading and unloading area. It was later identified as Lock 32 of the Miami and Erie Canal.

Pictured is the dozer the Buckeye Trail crew will be using along the towpath.

Transportation Enhancement Projects

Each year, the Ohio Department of Transportation awards federal transportation enhancement funds to community projects that preserve historic transportation sites, scenically enhance local roadways and add bicycle and pedestrian facilities throughout Ohio.

"Each enhancement project allows communities to not only build infrastructure but also develop projects that directly enhance the quality of life of their residents and make their communities more desirable places to live and work," said ODOT Director Gordon Proctor.

Three major projects were funded in the Miami and Erie Canal Heritage Corridor. Two projects are scheduled for construction between 2006 and 2009 and one project for construction through 2010.

The Canal Feeder Riverwalk in Sidney, Shelby County was awarded \$284,191 to construct a new bicycle / pedestrian trail on the towpath of the Sidney Feeder along the Great Miami River.

Projects along the Miami and Erie Canal Scenic Byway include the City of Delphos and Spencerville. The Delphos Downtown Streetscape Improvement Project was awarded \$735,912 for the removal and replacement of existing sidewalks and curbs, adorn new walks with brick pavers, trees, landscaping, benches and trash receptacles, and the installation of lighting and brick pavers through alleys to connect parking areas.

The Village of Spencerville community was awarded \$471,710 for an Enhanced Streetscape along State Route 66 (The Miami and Erie Canal Scenic Byway), between Second Street and Fourth Street. The project will include the installation of brick pavers, trees, shrubs, benches and trash receptacles.

To be eligible for funding, projects must have a local government sponsor and provide a 20 percent cash match to the federal funds. These projects are significant to the vision of assuring that the Miami and Erie Canal remains a viable asset in the Heritage Corridor.

Towpath Trekkers

The following individuals hiked or biked all four featured sections of the 2007 Towpath Trek Program. Commemorative "Towpath Trek" pins have been awarded to:

- Richard, Christie, Catie, and Andrew Millhouse
- Gene and Vicki Cordonnier
- Rick and Sue Quellhorst
- Marvin and Carol Ranly
- Steve Dorsten
- Dale Wical
- Jeff Bartlett
- Alex Rompilla
- Brad Goodwin
- Lois Bertram



"WHAT FUN! I walked your 'Towpath Trek' today and must thank you for such a great idea to award a pin as incentive. All four legs of the journey were great and gave me a new appreciation of the canal and our local history. My favorite however, was the Shelby path simply because it was so natural. To my delight, as I watched a deer moving to my left... I looked up trail as I stood there to see three deer on the trail watching me. It was a gift for the senses to be in nature and witnessing the sights, smells and actions happening around me. Your organization is to be commended for its work on the canal's history and restoration."

Thank you, Lois Bertram

Fall is a great time to experience the "2007 Treks". It is an exceptional beautiful time of the year. Summer's green thick garb is exchanged for fall's brilliant wardrobe of rainbow colors. What an opportunity to hike under a canopy of color, experience the history and diversity on the trail and "Step out to better Health" on the Towpath Trail. Go to the MECCA website at www.meccainc.org for a description and directions to the "2007 Treks". Commemorative pins are still available.

Four different trail sections will be featured for the 2008 Towpath Trek Program. Look for information in future Towpath Times Newsletters.



Delphos Canal Commission trustees and members of the cast of "Bloody Bridge" dress in period clothing for the Delphos Canal Days Parade.

Parade Float in Delphos

By L. Neal Brady
Executive Director

Miami-Erie Canal Corridor Association

On Sunday September 16, 2006, MECCA in partnership with the Delphos Canal Commission entered the Delphos Canal Days Parade.

The canal boat was decorated with signs noting the 20th anniversary of the Delphos Canal Commission (DCC). Featured on the canal boat were Elmer and, Teresa Bradstock Trustees of the DCC and several cast members of the production of Celeste Geise's "Bloody Bridge." The play was presented at the Jefferson Middle School in Delphos as a highlight of the 50th anniversary of the Delphos Canal Days. The Canal Boat entry was awarded 2nd place in civic group.

Brady Gets Water Advisory Nod

Ohio Governor Ted Strickland recently announced the appointment of MECCA Executive Director Lewis Neal Brady to the Ohio Water Advisory Council.

The Water Advisory Council advises the chief of the Division of Water, recommends policy with respect to water management and conservation, and recommends ways to enhance cooperation among governmental agencies that have an interest in water use and consumption.

Brady retired in 2004 after 30 years at the Ohio Department of Natural Resources, Division of Parks and Recreation. He is currently the Executive Director of the Miami and Erie Canal Corridor Association. Brady received a bachelor's degree from The Ohio State University in 1975 and a master's degree in business administration from Wright State University in 1999.

How to Organize Volunteer Canal Projects

By Steve Dorsten
Supervisor
ODNR, Division of Water

What does it take to have a volunteer project day on the Miami and Erie Canal?

It is easier than you think! Any individual or organization with a project, idea or looking for one, can with a simple phone call start the process.

Contact Steve Dorsten ODNR Division of Water Volunteer Coordinator at (419) 394-5950. Completion of a short two-page information form is needed. The form requires signatures of the volunteer leader and the Chief of the Division of Water.

A time frame of 7-10 days is needed to process the forms. This contract entitles the volunteers to enter state property and perform their activities. The contract also details the responsibilities of the volunteer organization and the State of Ohio.

Now you're ready to get started. The activity can be a one-day event or several events spread out through the year. Your project may include ideas as simple as clearing litter and brush, installing benches, installation of signage or more difficult jobs such as cutting trees, rebuilding canal banks and rip-rapping.

Numerous organizations in

Delphos, Spencerville, St. Marys, and Minster have already started such projects. Boy Scouts of America (BSA) Eagle Scout and Girl Scout Gold Star Award projects are popular along the Miami and Erie Canal.

Division of Water employees will assist in the volunteer activity in labor and equipment when necessary. These partnership projects not only provide a service to the community and the surrounding area, but also is a huge help to the Division of Water's continuing efforts in maintaining the historic canal network and structures.



Civic groups in St. Marys have organized several "Clean-Up Days" recently to clean debris from the canal and canal banks.



GOBA Visits Corridor

More than 2,600 cyclists toured through the Miami and Erie Canal Heritage Corridor during the 19th Annual Great Ohio Bicycle Adventure (GOBA) that was conducted June 16-23, 2007.

The event was themed “Bike Me to the Moon” and began and ended in Celina. The tour also visited Van Wert and Wapakoneta. On Wednesday June 20, 2007 the cyclists had the opportunity to stop in the Miami and Erie Canal Heritage Center while traveling through New Bremen.

Approximately 150 individuals visited the Center where MECCA Board members Tom Fledderjohann and volunteers discussed the history and the future of the Canal Corridor.

The tour visited Lockington and Johnson Farm before reaching Troy. The final days of the GOBA visited Versailles, Greenville and ended in Celina on Saturday.

The GOBA tour offered a minimum of 265 miles and up to 425 in designated routes to ride during the week.

MECCA enjoyed greeting the avid cyclists and promoting the Heritage Corridor. The route offered many opportunities to experience the once active and now revitalized Miami and Erie Canal. Over 70 commemorative “Towpath Trek” pins were awarded to tour participants.



Many participants of the Great Ohio Bicycle adventure stopped in the MECCA Heritage Center in New Bremen to learn more about the corridor.



Cyclists take over New Bremen during the GOBA tour.

Corridor a Tourism Stop

*By L. Neal Brady
Executive Director
Miami-Erie Canal Corridor Association*

The Ohio Department of Travel and Tourism states that travel and tourism is one of the top three industries in Ohio creating more than 552,000 full-time equivalent jobs and \$1.5 billion in tax revenue for the state.

The statistics indicate that over 70 percent of tourists are considered day-use travelers. The day-use travelers desire “real life, real American” experiences. These experiences include visiting small towns and communities, rural farming areas, historic areas and unique attractions as well as shopping.

The visitors are looking for adult destinations with a family atmosphere. The trends indicate that learning, growth, and having fun are important to the traveler. They desire the freedom to personalize their experience by re-discovering the familiar and discovering the past.

The Miami and Erie Canal Heritage Corridor has many of the products and services that the day-use traveler and the overnight tourist desire. The Miami and Erie Canal Scenic Byway extends from the Johnson Historic Farm to Delphos. Traveling the Byway at their own pace, tourists can experience the historic canal towns and communities, the prosperous rural farms and numerous museums and historic sites.

MECCA is committed to build synergies in the corridor to promote the many assets in the region. Let’s continue to invite people into the area so they can explore and enjoy what canal corridor has to offer.



Third graders from West Elementary School in St. Marys enjoyed an educational walk along the towpath from St. Marys to 40-Acre Pond. The program was sponsored by MECCA and the ODNR Division of Water.

ODOT to Support Lockington, New Bremen Projects

In partnership with local communities across the state, the Ohio Department of Transportation (ODOT) is awarding more than \$7.3 million in federal funds to several projects that highlight Ohio's rich transportation history and revitalize the scenic streetscapes of our state's smaller towns.

These federal dollars are part of ODOT's Transportation Enhancement Program, which annually provides approximately \$21 million for projects that enhance the transportation experience by improving the cultural, historic, aesthetic and environmental aspects of transportation infrastructure. This also includes dollars for projects aimed at pedestrian and bicycle trails, which will be awarded later this month.

In larger cities, these funds are distributed by regional Metropolitan Planning Organizations (MPO). ODOT sets aside additional funds to partner with smaller communities

outside of MPO boundaries, offering to fund up to 80% of the cost for construction on these historic and scenic streetscape projects.

Two projects in The Miami and Erie Canal Heritage were awarded funding including the Lock One Lock Keeper's House and Welcome Center in New Bremen.

This is for the construction of a Scenic Welcome Center. The

structure will replicate the house used by the Lock Keeper of Lock One North on the Miami and Erie Canal.

Also receiving funding was the Lock 1 Reconstruction in the Village of Lockington.

This includes the reconstruction of Lock One South (phase 1 of 3), including the removal of foundation stones and replace with a concrete foundation and total rebuild.

Walk With Nature Set for Oct. 21

The 2007 Walk with Nature is sponsored by The St. Marys Kiwanis Club, New Bremen – New Knoxville Rotary Club, The Miami and Erie Canal Corridor Association, The St. Marys Area Chamber of Commerce and the Ohio Department of Natural Resources, Division of Water.

The sign-up area for the Walk will be the St. Marys Memorial Park and walkers will have the opportunity to experience the Towpath Trail both north and south of St. Marys. Buses will shuttle on regular intervals. The program is free.

Lock One Renovation Maintains Canal Era Look

By Karen L. Mauch
New Bremen Village Planner/Economic Development

Work continues on the Lock One North Renovation project in New Bremen. A goal of the entire project is to maintain as much as possible the appearance of the Lock One North area during the height of the canal era. This goal has guided the planning and construction that has taken place. To date, work on the lock itself has been completed. In 1910 the original wooden lock was replaced by the State of Ohio with a concrete structure. Great care was taken in the current restoration to duplicate the lock's 1910 appearance. This includes the use of concrete forms specifically designed to replicate the appearance the restored 1910 lock. Additionally, the anchoring irons on the south side are original pieces. All other metal work was fabricated using traditional techniques. The 7,000 pound white oak gates which have been installed in the lock are also replicas of the original gates. While the restored Lock One North will not be functional, the gates on the south side are able to be opened and closed.

At this writing, final landscaping work around the lock continues. The landscaping plan includes placing 40 cast iron posts around the perimeter of the lock. These posts are replicas of those that were used as part of the fencing around the lock in the early 1900's. Gas lights will line the towpath adjacent to the lock and finally, brick pavers and new paving in the parking lot will complete the landscaping.

In September the Village of New Bremen was awarded a Transportation Enhancement Grant from the Ohio De-

Delphos Seniors Get History Tour

Celebrating the 10th annual tour, the Delphos Rotary Club coordinated a historical tour of the Delphos community for 175 high school seniors from Delphos Jefferson High School and Delphos St. Johns High School.

This tour provided the opportunity to present information on the Miami and Erie Canal Heritage Corridor, the construction and operation of the canal, and how the canal influenced the development and prosperity in the Delphos Community. Stone Lock 24, located at the north of Delphos, became an interpretive opportunity to discuss numerous points of the operation of the canal, how boats locked through and the history of the passengers and cargo that floated on the first interstate transportation system in western Ohio.

Steve Dorsten of the Ohio Department of Natural Resources, Division of Water, MECCA Trustees Lou Hohman and Bob Ebbeskotte and MECCA Director Neal Brady presented canal information to the students and group leaders on the tour.

partment of Transportation. The \$479,000 grant will be matched by \$120,000 from the New Bremen Historic Association, and will be used to construct a welcome center on the west side of Lock One. The location and the exterior of the welcome center will duplicate the Lock One North lock keeper's home which stood next to the lock until the late 1960's. The building will contain exhibits of canal artifacts and pictures which will illustrate the influence of the Miami and Erie Canal on the history and development of New Bremen. Plans for the welcome center also include office space and a large meeting room. Drawings for the welcome center are on display in the village municipal building. You can also view the plans at www.newbremen.com. Click on the News link, then the story "Lock Tender's House Plans Revealed".



Finishing touches at Lock One in New Bremen.

Rotary Park Project Begins

The New Bremen/New Knoxville Rotary Club is finalizing plans for a fall construction of Phase 1 of the Rotary Centennial Park Project.

The Project site is located at the intersection of State Route 274 (Monroe Street) and State Route 66 in New Bremen. The project will compliment the Lock 1 Park project being undertaken by the Village of New Bremen and the New Bremen Historical Association.

TAX-DEDUCTIBLE GIVING TO MECCA

Many people consider making charitable contributions for income tax purposes. Remember, MECCA is a tax-exempt entity and contributions to it are tax deductible. Contributions can be in cash or "in kind". Appreciated stock can be given to a charity and the donor gets a charitable deduction for the fair market value of the stock on the date of the gift. If you are considering charitable gifts please consider a contribution to MECCA to help promote the historic canal corridor.

Miami Erie Canal Corridor Association (MECCA) Membership/Donation Form



Please check membership or donation level desired

- | | | | |
|---|-------|--------------------|-------|
| \$15 Individual..... | _____ | \$25 Family..... | _____ |
| \$50 Sponsor..... | _____ | \$100 Partner..... | _____ |
| \$250 Corridor Partner | _____ | | _____ |
| One-time tax deductible contribution of | _____ | | _____ |
| Total amount enclosed | _____ | | _____ |

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Miami Erie Canal Corridor Association
130 S. Washington St.
P.O. Box 246
New Bremen, Ohio 45869