

# Towpath Times



Miami and Erie Canal Corridor Association

www.meccainc.org

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## Corridor Partners Hear From Parks Chief

The annual Partnership Dinner for the Miami and Erie Canal Corridor Association was held at American Legion Post 217 in Sidney on Thursday evening, April 30. About 60 MECCA members and interested parties attended to hear talks on the theme “Connecting the Corridor” from Piqua to Delphos.

From Miami County, Robert J. Shook spoke on the progress of the Miami County Bikeway, part of the Miami Conservancy District. Shook is Chairman of the Miami County Trails Task Force, and mentioned that his organization is heavily involved in the development of bicycle trails and is formulating plans for water trails. Shook emphasized the need to aggressively develop public and private partnerships to accomplish aggressive goals.

The evening also included a presentation by Dan West, Chief of the Ohio Department of Natural Resources Division of Parks and Recreation. Recent realignment of ODNR divisions places the canal heritage corridor under West’s supervision.

“It’s not too far of a stretch for Parks and Recreation to be the keeper of this great historical resource. We feel very comfortable that we’re in the right game,” West said.

He also noted that Ohio has the last hand-operated lock and dam system in the U.S. and that the Ohio Canal

System is one of the nation’s great engineering marvels.

MECCA Executive Director Neal Brady gave an update on other accomplishments and current projects in the canal corridor. On-going streetscape projects in Delphos and Spencerville are drawing more people to use the canal corridor for recreational purposes. Downtown development in St. Marys is centered along the canal as it passes through the center of town, and the canal figures prominently in decisions for improvements.



**Dan West (left) Chief of the Ohio Department of Natural Resources Division of Parks and Recreation speaks at the Partnership Dinner with ODNR’s Steve Dorsten, who works out of the St. Marys Office.**

In New Bremen, continued development of the Kuenning-Dicke Natural Area is bringing people out to enjoy the walking trails and towpath trail along the canal. Brady also announced that bids will be advertised and awarded during June for construction of the Lockkeeper’s House adjacent to Lock One in downtown New Bremen. The MECCA office will move to the Lockkeeper’s House when the building is completed in early 2010.

Several Village officials from Minster attended the partnership event, as the canal corridor will be included in plans for streetscape and infrastructure improvements in

Minster in the near future.

A summary of renovation and improvement work on the five “stair step” locks at Lockington showed how the Miami County Bikeway will eventually be connected with the canal corridor to provide additional trails for public

# Lockkeeper's House Close to Becoming Reality

*Submitted by Jim Coons  
Executive Director, Southwestern  
Auglaize County Chamber of  
Commerce and MECCA Secretary*

After several years of thought, and two years of fundraising and detailed planning, the historic Lockkeeper's House in New Bremen is very close to becoming a reality.

After many years of service during the canal era, the structure (known in New Bremen as "the Thompson House") was razed in the mid 1960's. Efforts to reconstruct the building were spurred by the successful renovation of Lock One North in 2006-07.

At this time, plans prepared by Garman-Miller and Associates of Minster, Ohio, have been approved by the state. A Transportation Enhancement grant through the Ohio Department of Transportation was approved in the 2009-2010 budget for funding in excess of \$500,000. The New Bremen Historic Association has met the goal of providing local

matching funds of approximately \$131,000.

The Village of New Bremen will be advertising for bids on the project during June with construction expected to begin in July 2009. Completion of the Lockkeeper's House and occupancy by MECCA and the Southwestern Auglaize County Chamber of Commerce is expected in early 2010.

Design and construction plans call for numerous "green technology" components: compact fluorescent and dimmable lighting controlled by occupancy sensors, metal roofing, low-E glass, tankless water heating, and superior insulation. Plans also include options for geothermal heating and cooling.

The historic look and feel of the building will be complemented with 21st Century technology. Canal era lighting fixtures, doors and windows, paneling, and siding are being used along with multi-media video and audio systems, and computerized

displays. Several areas of the building will be equipped with "new technology" for interpretative and educational displays and presentations.

Of course, the building is completely handicap accessible with elevator access to all three floors.

Final decisions on decorations, furniture, murals, displays and the like will be made as the building construction progresses.

Fundraising efforts will continue with the sale of keys to the front door. One lucky person will purchase the one key that unlocks the building and win \$1000 in cash and numerous other prizes, including a lifetime membership to the Historic Association. Keys are available for \$20 each from MECCA and the Chamber of Commerce. The winner will be determined at the time the building is dedicated.

For further information, to make a contribution or to purchase a key, contact the MECCA office.



*Historic artistic rendering of Lock One and Lockkeeper's House in New Bremen.*



*Lock 4 South in Lockington is showing its age.*

## State Budgets Funding for Renovations at Lockington

From the fiscal year 2009 Capital Budget of the State of Ohio, \$462,000 has been awarded to the Village of Lockington and the Ohio Historical Society for the lock stabilization of the Lockington Locks.

The Lockington Locks includes five locks at the south end of the summit of the Miami and Erie Canal.

The locks are inoperable and are maintained as a vestige of the canal system and as an important example of civil engineering work of the 19th century. They are listed on the National Register of Historic Places.

A study was completed by McMullan and Associates, Inc. Consulting Structural Engineers of Vienna, Virginia, an authority on lock construction and preservations to determine what work was needed to preserve the 5 locks.

The study determines that two of the locks must be reconstructed and the others undergo substantial stabilization and reconstruction if the site is to be preserved and the safety of the public maintained. Comparing measurements taken in 1986, the consultants found that the walls continue to move inward due to the deterioration of the cribbing and the force of the earth behind the walls.

Standard engineering margins of safety are no longer being met and sections of the walls could collapse at any time. Besides endangering the public, collapse of the walls would make reconstructions difficult and more expensive. Work on the locks is expected to begin in early 2010.

## National Trails Day Celebrates New Trail

*Submitted by Allison Brady  
Executive Director  
Heritage Trails Park District*

Join in the celebration of National Trails Day on June 6, 2009 as we open a new section of the Miami and Erie Canal Towpath Trail with a short ceremony to dedicate the trail beginning at

10 a.m. Located at Noble Township Hall in Auglaize County, this 2 mile section of towpath has been rebuilt with a grant from the Clean Ohio Fund to the Heritage Trails Park District.

Take a hike and then stop in and visit the Auglaize Outdoors Show from 9 AM to Noon. This show puts the emphasis on enjoying the outdoors. The many exhibits will focus on conservation, recreation, education, wildlife, and fitness. Take advantage of the Road to Fitness 5K Run/Walk, sponsored by Joint Township District Memorial Hospital.

All events are free and open to the public. Refreshments will be served. Bring the entire family and enjoy the morning with a hike on the towpath trail.

The American Hiking Society sponsors National Trails Day. All around the country people will be working on and enjoying hiking trails. You can be part of the national celebration right here in Auglaize County. Local sponsors include the Heritage Trails Park District, the Miami and Erie Canal Corridor Association, Joint Township District Memorial Hospital, and The Evening Leader.



# Spencerville Streetscape Phase II to Begin

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

The Village of Spencerville has developed plans and a Streetscape Project will be undertaken on the State Route 66, designated as the Miami and Erie Canal Scenic Byway and on Third Street to the edge of the Miami and Erie Canal.

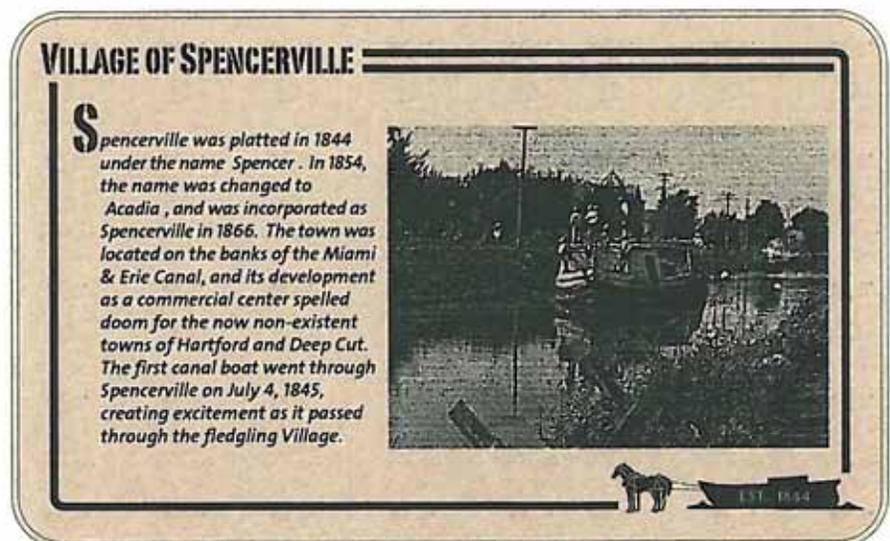
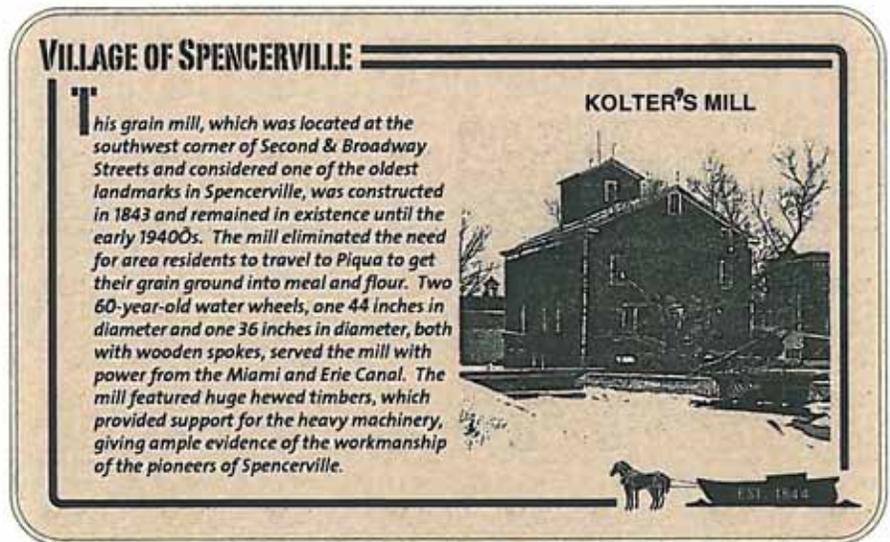
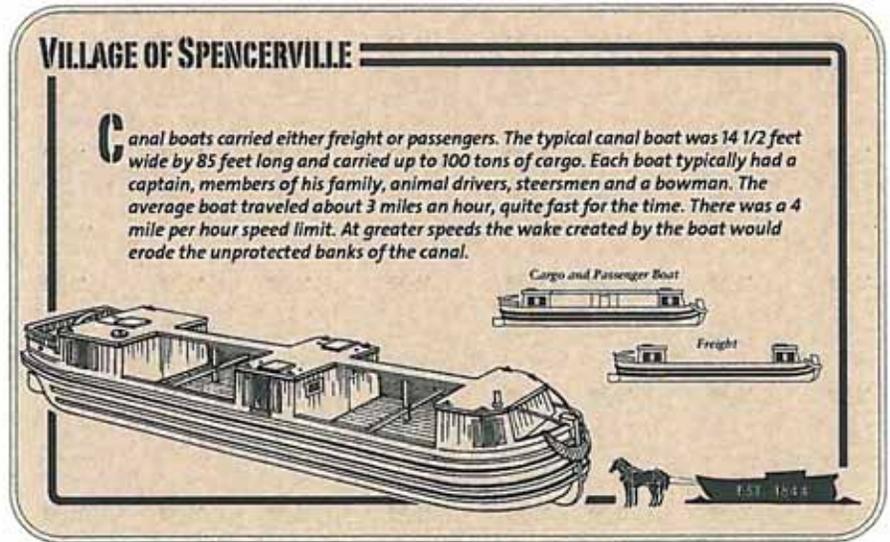
This is considered Phase II of a four phase enhancement program developed in 2006. The estimated cost of the Streetscape Project is \$1,200,000 with grants covering all costs except for approximately \$106,000 for local village funding.

The components to the project on Broadway Street (State Route 66) between Second and Fourth Streets include repair of sidewalks, curb and gutter; installation of brick pavers; planting of 30 trees; installations of raised planters with shrubbery, handicapped ramps, trash receptacles and benches; decorative lighting; and street resurfacing.

The focal point of the project is the enhancement of Third Street to the Miami and Erie Canal. The components include replacement of the asphalt lot with brick pavers and concrete, installation of a clock, installation of raised planters with shrubbery, decorative lighting, trash receptacles and benches, and an information center with canal interpretative signage.

The construction will begin July 1, 2009 (immediately following the Spencerville Summerfest scheduled for June 25 -28, 2009) and expected completion on Sept. 30, 2009.

In 2016, Phase III of the enhancement program is expected to begin. The Miami and Erie Canal Enhancement Project will address canal bank stabilization, greenway development and pedestrian access to the local business community along the watered section of canal.



Samples of interpretive signage that is scheduled to be a part of Spencerville's Phase II Streetscape Project.

# Lock 13 Work Continues

Lock 13 is being reconstructed and concrete work will be completed by 2010. Plans include the installation of wooden gates and control fixtures similar to the fixtures that were used to control water and lift canal boats through the lock during the canal era. The reconstructed lock will be a focal point for the uptown community and a walkway will be completed connecting Memorial Park and the Carl Chiles Trail that extends to the north towards 40 Acre. Recently, renovation work was completed under the Spring Street Bridge in the towpath trail tunnel. Painting, installation of decorative light fixtures and brick pavers highlight this section of Towpath Trail through the community.

Adjacent to Lock 13, construction on the First Financial Banking Center is underway. A concrete retaining wall has been installed and will permit the filling of the site behind the wall between Spring Street and High Street. Development of a parking area and public access between the two streets will be completed.



**Work continues on Lock 13 project in St. Marys.**

# First Winter Hike Held on Towpath Trail

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

More than 30 walkers braved the freezing rain to walk sections of Towpath Trail between Minster and Lock Two for the first ever "Winter Canal Hike" Jan. 10, 2009.

The central starting point was the Crown Pavilion in New Bremen and some walkers went to Minster and visited the Minster Historical Museum. Other walkers enjoyed the towpath to the Kuenning Dicke Natural Area for a round trip total length of 5 kilometers. Participants registered and were armed with hot chocolate, coffee, DanActive and granola bars for making the trek.

The Winter Hike was the kick-off event for the Grand Lake Health System's "Road to Fitness" program that encourages individuals to walk, run, bike, and hike in organized events in the Canal Heritage Corridor. Through the program, participants

will earn points towards rewards and prizes. The Hike was a collaborative effort with the goal of assisting individuals to achieve a healthier lifestyle.

In addition to MECCA and Grand Lake Health System, the Winter Hike

was also sponsored by The Dannon Company, New Bremen- New Knoxville Rotary Club, New Bremen Historical Society, Minster Historical Society, Southwestern Auglaize County Chamber of Commerce, Heritage Trails Park District and the villages of Minster and New Bremen.



**Hikers brave the frozen towpath for the first-ever Winter Canal Hike.**

# River Basin Designated “Important Bird Area”



**IBA committee L to R in front: Jill Bowers, Carol Bertrand, President, Tri Moraine Audubon, Allison Brady. Back Row: Gary Steinbrunner, Conservation Outreach Specialist, St. Marys River IBA, Jay Frysinger, and John Bowers.**

*Submitted by Allison Brady  
Executive Director  
Heritage Trails Park District*

The St. Marys River Basin was dedicated as an Important Bird Area (IBA) by Audubon Ohio on May 6, 2009.

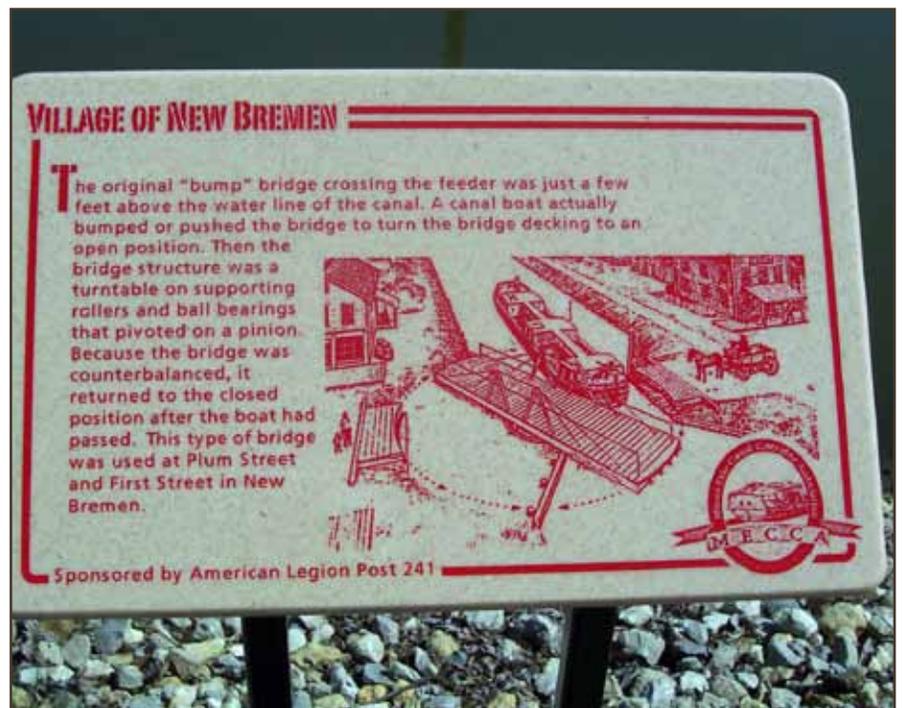
This ecosystem located in Auglaize, Mercer and Van Wert Counties is one of 66 in Ohio identified as having high quality habitat. The Miami and Erie Canal runs through the St. Marys River watershed from New Bremen north to Spencerville, making the canal a vital part of this IBA.

The goal of this program is to restore, enhance, and develop land management practices in the St. Marys River watershed to protect and enhance water quality and wildlife habitat.

These practices include the restoration and development of wetlands, riparian buffers, windbreaks, grass filter strips, field borders, reforestation, and conservation easements.

## Eagle Scout Tackles Interpretive Sign Project

New Bremen High School senior, Brandon Rose of Boy Scout Troop 95 added to the community and worked in meeting requirements for Eagle Scout status by developing and installing signage along the Miami and Erie Canal in the New Bremen. Brandon chose this project because of the historical canal connection to the village. By sharing and interpreting the canal facts with trail users, the local history will not be lost. MECCA President Tom Fledderjohann and Executive Director Neal Brady assisted in gathering information and determining site location for the signs. Eight signs were placed between Amsterdam Road and Lock 2 highlighting sites as Amsterdam Road Bridge, the Bump Bridge at Plum Street, ice ponds, dry docks and the location of mile Marker 123.



**One of eight interpretive signs erected in the New Bremen area.**



## Trail Bridge in Henry County

*Submitted by Rick Adamson  
BT/NCT State Trail Coordinator*

The Henry County Park Board in concert with the Buckeye Trail Association received \$52,000 in grants to purchase and construct three fiberglass bridge structures on the Towpath Trail in Henry County. These bridges are installed and now connect trail sections that were once inaccessible. The bridge placement will permit the relocation of the Buckeye Trail and the North County National Scenic Trail from public roadways onto this now contiguous section of Towpath Trail. An additional grant is being submitted for another 60 feet fiberglass bridge at an estimated cost of \$25,000. The additional bridge will extend the Towpath Trail network through Henry County.

## ODNR Division Switch for Canal

*Submitted by Steve Dorsten*

The Ohio Department of Natural Resources Director Sean Logan on March 15, 2009 realigned all state-owned canal lands from ODNR Division of Water to ODNR Division of Parks and Recreation. The realignment will streamline processes, do away with overlapping services and strengthen the canal program. Director Logan has watched the canal program grow over the years and expects the move to a bigger division with more resources to enhance the program and allow it to expand and blossom. Partnerships and previous agreements with the Division of Water will remain intact and strengthened upon.

Ohio Canal Lands have long held a relationship with Canal Reservoirs and State Parks such as Grand Lake St. Marys, Indian Lake, Lake Loramie, Mary Jane Thurston and Independence Dam on the Miami and Erie Canal; along with Portage Lakes, Guilford Lake, Beaver Creek, Salt Fork, Muskingum River, Buckeye Lake and Lake White on the Ohio and Erie Canal.

The opportunity offers to utilize these new resources for continuing the vision of opening and connecting the Miami and Erie Canal Heritage Corridor.

All Miami and Erie Canal Lands contact information remains the same: Steve Dorsten; ODNR Division of Parks and Recreation; 834 Edgewater Dr.; St. Marys, Oh; 45885; 419-394-5950.

## Park Project in New Bremen

The Village of New Bremen has reviewed numerous options for the stabilization of the canal section at the intersection of SR 66 (Washington Street) and SR 274 (Monroe Street). New Bremen Village Council members voted to enclose the canal with a concrete culvert and develop a landscaped open park on the site. The New Bremen - New Knoxville Rotary Club has been coordinating with the village and will sponsor the site development. Plans include tree and shrub plantings, brick paved areas, walkways, raised planters and park benches.



**Canal area to be replaced by park in New Bremen.**

## Swinging Bridge Planned

The Buckeye Trail Association in cooperation with several businesses and partners are planning to install a 146' long swinging bridge over Blue Creek in Paulding County. Students from the Engineering School of Ohio Northern University designed the structure to meet all safety standards. The bridge will be anchored at one end into the foundation of the original wooden aqueduct that spanned the creek. The estimated cost of the swinging bridge is \$125,000. Most materials, supplies and labor for construction and installation will be donated by local and regional businesses. The anticipated completion date is fall 2009.

## Minster Street Project set for 2011

The Village of Minster will receive Transportation Enhancement funding that will allow the village to undertake valuable aesthetic improvements to promote the Fourth Street corridor as a focal point of the community. The funding available through the program would allow the village to undertake a complete street reconstruction and streetscape project. The heritage inspired design of the streetscape would include the removal of overhead utilities and existing concrete sidewalks would be replaced with a combination of bricks and concrete. Other items would include pedestrian crosswalk enhancements, tree and decorative plantings, historically themed street lighting and traffic signals as well as signage and streetscape furnishings such as benches and trash receptacles. Planning and engineering of the project has already begun with a construction date tentatively set for 2011.

# 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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