

## Canal Rehab Begins in Spencerville



**W**ork is well under way on canal improvement projects in Spencerville.

Using primarily Nature Works funding, contractors, under the direction of the Ohio Department of Natural Resources, are making repairs to Lock 16 and the Side Spillway, and dredging most of the canal in the village of Spencerville.

Nature Works was a ballot initiative passed by Ohio voters in 1993, which provided for the purchase of bonds for various capital improvement projects. Since 1995, \$2.5 million has been allocated to sections of the Miami-Erie Canal still owned and maintained by ODNR.

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**BIG IMPROVEMENT!**  
*The canal improvements in Spencerville (top) are beginning to take shape, as dredging and rip-rapping are being completed. Work is also being done to Lock 16 (right) and the Side Spillway. The improvement projects are being funded by Nature Works Bonds.*



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Phase 1 of the improvements has focused on the Spencerville area where the canal is being dredged to nearly its original depths. The banks are being rip-rapped to slow the erosion. The dredging is expected to be complete from Lock 16 to south of Lock 15 this summer.

ODNR Division of Water and Administrative personnel attended the MECCA Board meeting in February with tentative plans for "Phase 2" of the canal improvements. Projects which might be bid out this spring as part of Phase 2 include:

- Dredging of the Feeder Canal from Lake St. Marys

- Repair of the culverts at Barrington Creek
- Repair of the Tumbles near the St. Marys Municipal Power Plant
- Repair and beautification of Lock 14
- Repair of the Six-Mile Creek Aqueduct

Potential additional projects (based on available funding) include:

- Dredging between Six-Mile Creek and Spencerville
- Repair and Beautification of Lock 8
- Enhancement of the canal between New Bremen and St. Marys

Additional canal improvement projects are being funded through a

\$180,000 ISTEAA grant. ODNR has contracted with the Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) to construct and install historical designation signs along the canal. The CCC will also be removing some trees and leveling the towpath.

Trees scheduled to be removed are on the upground portions of the towpath only, where an uprooting would cause a major leak in the canal bed. Removal of trees will probably not begin until this fall, while some of the signage work will get under way this summer.

The MECCA Board is also working with the Buckeye Trail Association and the North Country Trail Association to create additional towpath signage with trail designations.

# MECCA is looking for grass roots!

*By Monika Wanamaker  
MECCA Board Vice President*

It's Spring and MECCA is looking for grass... as in grass roots support.

Why? We're working to acquire National Heritage Corridor Designation. That's when a specific physical site is so called by means of federal legislation for having historical significance.

Now, we all know the Miami-Erie Canal has historical significance. Historical corridor designation will enable us to preserve the Miami-Erie Canal as a viable resource by opening some economic doors.

When applying for federal grants and funds, "National Heritage Corridor" is a flag that federal agencies will recognize. When we go to corporations for assistance,

"National Heritage Corridor" signals that we are serious about our goals. When we go to local citizens and communities, a "National Heritage Corridor" gives them a connection.

Paul Labovitz of the National Park Service is guiding our work. He helped the Ohio & Erie Canal Corridor Coalition in the eastern part of Ohio, between Cleveland and Zoar, acquire this status in 1996. His staff prepared a resources study for them, but they needed strong public support and a non-profit organization to promote the canal corridor. MECCA is the organization, and YOU are the public support.

"National Heritage Corridor" designation is the common thread that ties us together -- historical societies that want to make sure the

canal doesn't disappear all together; local businesses and industries who know the importance of quality of life issues for their employees; towns and villages whose population deserves a clean, safe environment; schools teaching local history; families who want to enjoy a recreational area. The Miami-Erie Canal Corridor can address all of those areas.

To acquire National Heritage Corridor designation we need your support. Have you got any ideas about the canal or the towpath and adjacent areas? Is there something you've been wanting to talk to us about? To reach us, please drop us a note at P.O. Box 722; St. Marys, OH; 45885, or contact any board member. Join us - let us know that you're willing to become a supporter of MECCA.



*This photo of the aqueduct over Lorain Creek is from the collection of Rita Hoying of Minster. The aqueduct is one of the many structures that were destroyed during the 1913 flood, which halted traffic on the Miami-Erie Canal for good. This is one of many photos that have been collected for a history book that MECCA is hoping to publish in the near future. A committee working on the book project is looking for additional photos and or stories about the Miami-Erie Canal.*



**THANKS -- MECCA Board Member Monika Wanamaker (left) presents Dee Hammel of the ODNR Division of Natural Areas and Preserves with a desk clock as a token of appreciation for Dee's services as a facilitator during several months of strategic planning. The MECCA board learned a great deal from the planning sessions and is continuing the process in committee.**

## **Book Committee to Meet**

The MECCA History Book Committee will meet Thursday, May 6, at the St. Marys Community Public Library Meeting Room. The meeting will begin at 6:30 p.m. and last until about 8 p.m.

The committee has been gathering information for a history book on the Miami-Erie Canal. If you're interested in doing some writing, researching, editing, etc., and would like to join the committee, please plan on attending. We welcome all the help we can get. If you have any historic information about the canal that you would like to contribute, come to the meeting or contact David Stilwell at 419-394-8874.

## **Changes set for Deep Cut**

The Johnny Appleseed Metro Park District and the Heritage Trails Park District are considering lease agreements that would convert Deep Cut from an Ohio Department of Transportation roadside rest to a joint two-county park.

The park straddles the Allen/Auglaize County line, and improvements are currently under way that will enhance the park and help eliminate vandalism, which has plagued the area in the past. Park district officials hope to create a major trail head at the park, from which many activities can be launched.

# Support the Miami-Erie Canal Corridor Authority Become a Member Today

**E**stablished in 1996, The Miami-Erie Canal Corridor Authority (MECCA) is a non profit corporation working toward the creation of a heritage corridor and recreational greenway along the Miami & Erie Canal. The Authority is working toward the creation of educational programs and developing strong working relationship among corridor stakeholders to preserve and interpret the natural, historical and recreational resources throughout the corridor.



### Membership Benefits

- Quarterly Issues of a Newsletter
- Invitations to public meetings
- Invitations to programs and events
- Support the goals of MECCA

## Miami Erie Canal Corridor Authority (MECCA) Membership Form



*Please check membership level desired*

\$10 Individual ..... \_\_\_\_\_ \$20 Family ..... \_\_\_\_\_

\$50 Sponsor ..... \_\_\_\_\_ \$100 Partner ..... \_\_\_\_\_

\$250 Corridor Partner ..... \_\_\_\_\_

One-time tax deductible contribution of ..... \_\_\_\_\_

Total amount enclosed ..... \_\_\_\_\_

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Address \_\_\_\_\_

City \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_ Zip \_\_\_\_\_ email \_\_\_\_\_

*Clip and Mail This Form to: MECCA • P.O. Box 722 • St. Marys, Ohio • 45885*

**Miami Erie Canal Corridor Authority  
P.O. Box 722  
St. Marys, Ohio 45885**