2020 FOGVG Annual Meeting to be Online

What’s Happening on the Greenway?

The 2020 Annual Meeting is scheduled for Sunday, November 8, from 4 to 5:30 pm EST. Here is information on the meeting. Additional program details, a complete agenda and a link to register will be available at www.fogvg.org. Please plan to join us.

What’s Happening on the Greenway?

Following the President’s Message, four presenters will answer this question from each of their unique perspectives.

- **GVG Park Manager Kristine Uribe** will review the $6.5 million worth of trail improvements underway north of Avon, provide a glimpse behind those “Trail Closed” barriers, and look ahead at what the future holds for the GVG.

- **FOGVG Director Carl Schoenthal** will discuss the GVG Trail Town program with the goal of promoting economic development, increased usership and improved trail amenities.

- **Director of Letchworth Gateway Villages Nicole Manapol** is also coordinator for the Genesee Valley Rural Economic Development Innovation (REDI) initiative. In these roles she has been working in collaboration with FOGVG to implement the GVG Trail Town Program and has secured $100,000 through USDA Rural Development to implement a Trail Town Business and Community Training Program and a comprehensive digital mapping tool for the Genesee Valley Region.

- **FOGVG Director Bob Amundson** will review current efforts in the Cuba community to help achieve the goal of Cuba as a trail town. See page 6 for details of the Ralph C. Wilson Jr. Legacy Fund, which is funding this initiative.

There will be an opportunity for Questions & Answers after the above four presentations.

A brief FOGVG business meeting will follow and include the FOGVG Annual Financial Report, election of FOGVG Directors and revision of FOGVG By-Laws. See www.fogvg.org for details.

**What do I need to participate?** All you need to participate is a computer or mobile device with audio and an internet connection. (Ideally a computer or tablet works best. Phones generally have too small a screen for meaningful viewing.)

**How do I join -- do I need to be "techie"?** This is EASY. You will receive information on how to join your specific webinar via your confirmation email. Here is a short video on what to expect. No advanced computer skills needed!

**Look for your confirmation email** immediately upon registration for participation details! (Check your spam folder, too, as sometimes they wind up there!)
We are saddened to note the passing of Edward “Ned” Holmes, one of the Genesee Valley Greenway’s long-time champions, first as the Natural Resources Supervisor at NYSDEC Region 8 and then, in retirement, as FOGVG President from 2003 to 2013.

I think of Ned as the Greenway “seedsman.” In the mid-1980s when greenways and multi-use trails were, for most, an unknown, he, along with members of the Finger Lakes Trail Conference, planted the seed by suggesting that NYS Dept. of Environmental Conservation (DEC) use state 1986 Environmental Bond Act funds to purchase the remaining 80 miles of abandoned Pennsylvania rail corridor. Negotiations began with then landowner, RG&E, but did not progress far enough for a funding application to be submitted. (NYS Office of Parks, Recreation, and Historic Preservation, or OPRHP, had purchased most of the 10 miles of rail corridor in Monroe County in 1984.)

However, Ned never gave up on his vision and was ready and willing “to nourish and tend the soil” when nonprofit Parks & Trails New York introduced the idea of a 90-mile multi-use trail again in 1991. Ned was an active member of the original steering committee that set in motion the Greenway’s development.

In those early Greenway days, as DEC Natural Resource Supervisor for Region 8 and because of the respect he had at all levels of the agency, Ned ensured the greenway idea took root. I remember one instance when, early on, Real Property had said there could be no Greenway without a full metes and bounds survey of the whole 90 miles, which would take at least 20 years to complete. Ned worked to make sure we got beyond that impasse.

When the Friends of the Greenway was formed in 1993 and it then entered into a partnership with NYS DEC and OPRHP in 1994, Ned’s inherent politeness, patience, fairness, and concern for others helped facilitate and nourish that relationship. In the early 1990s, a nonprofit partnering with two state agencies was a new concept, but Ned embraced the arrangement and gently taught the Friends much about working with state agencies, along with hunting, long-distance bicycling, being a good steward of wildlife and the land, and just how to be a better self.

The depth of Ned’s commitment to the Greenway was evident when he retired and took the helm of the Friends. Ever committed to the success of the Greenway and of the Friends, as president of FOGVG Ned continued to work from the “outside” to advance the Greenway’s progress. Not an easy task back then, but Ned and Jim Hutton biked the entire trail a half-dozen times so he could speak directly about the challenges that needed to be addressed.

Ned always believed we would achieve his long-held vision for the Greenway. He knew about the recent TAP and Wilson funding that is now helping to make many improvements. I am sad he will never be able to get on his bike and experience those wonderful changes, but I am grateful for all he did over more than 30 years to set the achievements of today in motion. We all owe him so much.

“We were all greatly saddened by Ned’s passing and are planning ways to honor his commitment and service to the GVG.”

Joan Schumaker, President, FOGVG
Remembering Ned Holmes continued...

Riding the Greenway with Ned
Jim Hutton

Between 2007 and 2012 Ned Holmes and I biked the Greenway end-to-end six times. Some of those rides were chronicled in the Greenway News at the time. With Ned’s passing I want to remember him by retelling the experience I enjoyed with him on these annual rides. This the first of three articles telling that story.

I believe the first time I met Ned Holmes was when I became a member of the Board of Directors of the Friends of the Genesee Valley Greenway (FOGVG). I had been biking the Greenway by myself, and occasionally with my wife, for several years before that, and had attended a couple of the FOGVG events. Someone from the board obviously noticed me at these, and assumed I was interested in the Greenway. They must have introduced themselves to me at one of these events, because shortly thereafter I was invited to become a member of the Board.

I had ridden my bike on the open sections of the Greenway south of Rochester and had begun exploring the unopened sections as far south as Portageville. Of course, Ned was very interested in exploring the Greenway as well. Thereafter, we began exploring the Greenway together to its end by bike. The first few times we drove to a starting point, unloaded our bikes, rode 8 or 10 miles one way, and then returned to where we started. After a while we each began driving our vehicles. We parked one at the end of that day’s ride, returned to the starting point with the other car and began the day’s trip from there. This method effectively doubled the length of trail we could explore in one day.

Several memorable events occurred on these one-day rides. I remember carrying our bikes across the closed bridge north of Rossburg before it was removed and inadvertently getting on the Conrail right-of-way south of Jackson Hill Road, and ending up a couple miles from the Greenway at the route 305 underpass, north of Cuba. Another time, when we returned to where we had parked our car at Whiskey Bridge, south of Portageville, there were several New York State Police cars and troopers there. One immediately came to us and asked where we had been, and whether we had seen any suspicious people on the trail. They were investigating reports of someone using the Greenway to access corn fields, where they were allegedly growing marijuana. I guess we didn’t look like the type of people who would be in that line of business. The worst thing that happened to us on one of these trips was arriving at our end point one day, and Ned discovering that he had left his car keys back at our starting point. Ned, being very gracious and a stronger biker than me, willingly volunteered to ride his bike all the way back to our starting point, and get my car, while I waited patiently for his return. Obviously, that turned out to be a very long day on the trail.

After a couple years of these daily bike rides exploring the Greenway, Ned and I decided to try an end-to-end ride. We made our first end-to-end ride in 2007, and then every year thereafter through 2012. I would have continued, but I was diagnosed with Parkinson’s Disease in January 2013. Ned asked me to go with him again, as my Parkinson’s disease had not affected my biking as yet. However, I was mostly concerned about falling off my bike, as some of the unopened sections of the trail were pretty rough. Therefore, I had to decline his request. I know Ned was very disappointed, but I did not think it was prudent to attempt a 3-day bike trip at that time. However, Ned did ride it again in 2013, accompanied by Davies Nagle.
A lot of hard work has gone into Genesee Valley Greenway State Park these past few months. Whether boots on the ground, permit processing, completing inspections or purchasing materials, there are numerous people involved both directly and indirectly. A shout out to Keeler Construction for supplying the manpower, equipment, and experience, and to all the Parks Staff in Genesee, Allegany, Niagara, and Albany Regions that have worked together to keep the project going through all the challenges 2020 has brought us.

Resurfacing the trail gave Parks an opportunity to address major flooding issues and culvert concerns. One of the larger culvert accomplishments is located just north of the Erie-Attica Trail junction. Every year, the field on the west side severely floods, so the new design included the installation of a large culvert well below the surface of the trail to handle the excess drainage. This required extensive digging in order to create and pour the required 30’ tall cement headwall.

As culvert work came to a close, trail work began. The task was to mill, or remove, the surface layer and replace it with a base layer of rolled out crusher run, topped off with a layer of stone dust. It sounds simple; however, the logistics of moving material along the same trail being worked on must be well choreographed. Large equipment trucks cannot pass each other, nor may they travel faster than 10 mph. It is only through the cooperation of adjacent landowners this project could get done in a timely manner. By agreement, certain neighbors are allowing construction equipment temporary access to some of their farm lanes. Please do not confuse this as permission for patrons to use these accesses. The lanes are still private property and the Greenway is still closed in this section.

Although the trail design is the same throughout, it passes through a variety of environments causing challenges along the way. Special care had to be taken while working through sensitive zones such as the Dugan Creek area south of Lehigh Valley Trail. This region has been flooding due to a failure of a structure that was designed to keep beaver away from blocking the culvert. Working with the Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC) we are carefully repairing and improving the anti-beaver apparatus and culvert system in order to keep the new trail safe from future issues.

Of course, there is no ill will towards our beaver residents; they are just doing what they are wired to do, create habitat…and we just want to watch.

While the project has been going very well, there have been a few setbacks mainly involving timing. The stone dust surface...
is very loose when it is first laid down and needs time to cure. Once it is ready, it is a very hard surface, yet more forgiving than pavement and therefore the perfect surface for the diverse recreation the Greenway sees daily. While the construction crews pay close attention to the weather, this is western N.Y. and a pop-up storm can happen unexpectedly. This has happened a few times causing damage that needed repair.

Another issue of bad timing has also been on the part of some folks who continue to use the trail regardless of it being closed and the damage it is causing. The more times the trail has to be repaired, the more it costs, leaving less funds for other projects. Patching in repairs also causes an issue with the integrity of the overall surface. We really need to continue to work together and stay off the trail until it is ready. It will be worth the wait. Promise.

Trail material must be laid carefully when working through sensitive environments such as Dugan Creek.

The trail is currently closed from Rt. 5 in Avon, Livingston County, to the south end of Canawaugus Park, Village of Scottsville, Monroe County. This section is considered Phase 1 of the Transformation Project. While there is access to the Lehigh Valley Trail (LVT) on the west side of the Genesee River all the way to the small parking area on River Rd., there is no access to the GVG north or south from LVT. Similarly, there is no access to the GVG from the Erie-Attica Trail closer to Avon. Updated trail information can be found on our website: https://parks.ny.gov/parks/189/details.aspx and on our Facebook page: https://business.facebook.com/GeneseeValleyGreenwayStatePark/?business_id=10152577167410938.

Phase 2 will bring the resurfacing from the north side of Canawaugus Park to Ballantyne Rd, Rochester, with a focus on wayfinding and user counting equipment continuing north into Genesee Valley Park. The design for some aspects of this phase is still in the works and therefore has not yet gone out to bid.

Phase 1 has until May 2021 to be completed, but we may see some sections of trail open before then.

Thank you for your continued support of Genesee Valley Greenway State Park. To catch Facebook Lives, or any new posts from the park, click the Facebook page link provided and click “Like”. Next, hover the pointer over the drop-down menu next to “Following” and click on the pencil next to “In Your Newsfeed” and “Notifications” to set your preference as to how often you wish to be notified. The only way to catch a Facebook Live is to turn on notifications.
The Friends of the Genesee Valley Greenway (FOGVG) has been awarded a $42,000 design and access grant by the Ralph C. Wilson, Jr. Legacy Funds administered by the Community Foundation for Greater Buffalo. The grant is in support of the Genesee Valley Greenway State Park (GVGSP): Cuba Public Access Project.

The funds will be used for a feasibility study to explore possible trail routes to close a critical gap in the 90-mile Genesee Valley Greenway State Park (GVGSP) within the Allegany County village and town of Cuba. A gap presently exists between 1.3 miles of existing GVGSP trail at the western edge of the Village of Cuba and existing GVGSP trail north of the Village in Allegany, Wyoming, Livingston, and Monroe Counties. According to FOGVG president Joan Schumaker, “Closing this trail gap is essential for both the GVGSP and the people in Cuba. We are most thankful that this grant will allow us to move closer to achieving this goal.”

The study will include an analysis of the possibility of State ownership of a trail route and prioritize recommendations with an implementation schedule, including timeframes to complete the Cuba trail route options for connecting the Greenway trail. One special focus of the study will be the Interstate 86 barrier, which separates the village trail section options from the Cuba-Rushford High School. Identifying a way to close this trail gap will provide a safe route to school for students from the village.

In supporting the grant request, Carlos Gildemeister, Superintendent at Cuba-Rushford Central School, stated, “The GVG passageway near the school could potentially have an environmentally friendly rest-stop maintained by students for the public enjoyment and recreation. This type of involvement and responsibility on the part of students would teach them responsibility and connect them to the benefit being added to the greater communities.”

The grant also complements FOGVG’s efforts to create a series of Greenway Trail Towns. The Trail Town initiative revitalizes rural communities by growing outdoor tourism and small businesses, building a foundation for long-term economic development and creating recreational opportunities with healthy outcomes. This initiative will also help preserve Cuba’s historic and natural resources for local residents.

According to FOGVG Director Carl Schoenthal, who is leading an effort to establish trail towns along the GVG and also serving as an administrator of this grant, “Another aspect of the study is to identify a Cuba entrance to the Greenway, a “Gateway” to serve as a State-owned pocket park and the Southern Gateway to the entire GVGSP. By establishing a continuous GVGSP and a Gateway within the village, Cuba can become a GVG Trail Town.

The Ralph C. Wilson Jr. Legacy Funds were established at the Community Foundation to provide support to four areas that were important to Mr. Wilson: caregivers, community assets, design and access, and youth sports. Endowment funds, like these created to honor Mr. Wilson, are designed to grow over time and provide funding for charitable causes according to a client’s wishes.
TIME TO RENEW

The list below includes all members for the 2019-20 year. The FOGVG membership year is from September 1 to August 31. **Those in bold are also members for 2020-21 since they took advantage of early renewal opportunities, are new members, or have recurring memberships through PayPal.** If your name is not on this list or if you have yet to renew, please use the enclosed membership envelope or go to www.fogvg.org to download a membership form or to complete your membership online.

**WE THANK ALL OUR MEMBERS & FRIENDS for their generous support.**

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John Yunker

Membership/Donation

** $500 or more
* $100 or more
Thank you!
#
New Member

Welcome!
The Winter 2019 Greenway News contained an article outlining how $6.5 million from both public and private sources will be spent on Greenway improvements. Included in this total was funding for a "Strategic Action Plan" to evaluate, set priorities, build public consensus and establish a road map for the next steps necessary to establish a first-class trail experience along the entire 90-mile length of the GVG.

Alta Planning and Design received the contract for developing the “Strategic Action Plan” and has been working with GVG State Park and NY State Parks to conduct this study using stakeholder interviews and public input to develop an action plan that will increase the number of users, improve access, and increase the Greenway’s contributions to the regional economy.

A website (www.geneseevalleygreenway.com) was established to help collect public comments and provide information concerning the study. In February, public presentations/input sessions were held in Cuba and Mt. Morris and an interactive map on the website was used through March 31, to accept additional public comments. After initial project prioritization and development, High-Impact Project Public Information Meetings were held remotely on August 20 and 21. On August 25, video recordings of these meeting were made available on the website, along with the 33-page Genesee Valley Greenway Action Plan - High Impact Projects.

The GVG Action Plan has identified 10 High Impact Projects. Five maps show the project locations by county and summaries of the projects and their benefits are included. Public Comments on this Plan were accepted through September 14 and FOGVG submitted extensive comments.

The following 10 High Impact Projects are identified in the Action Plan:

- Comprehensive Access Plan (Entire GVG)
- Stonedust Surfacing. (Entire GVG)
- Trail and route improvements from the CSX crossing Scottsville Rd. to Ballantyne Rd. (Monroe County)
- Trail Connections and Access North of the CSX Crossing. (Monroe County)
- Trailhead at the RG&E Lot at Genesee River in Town of Leicester (Livingston County)
- Re-Route GVG Trail around Letchworth Closure; Construct Genesee River Bridge to Portageville (Livingston & Wyoming Counties)
- Pedestrian Bridges of Allegany County (Allegany County)
- Conrail Property Trail and Access Design/Construction (Allegany County)
- Village of Cuba to Cuba High School Connection (Allegany County)
- Trail Connection from Cuba to Hinsdale and Olean via I-86 Corridor (Chautauqua County)

Timeline for completing this project:

September 30, 2020 - Final project report issued
October, 2020 – Survey priority project sites
Nov. 2020 – Feb. 2021 – Priority project sites 25% schematic design