



# Discover America

Newsletter of the American Discovery Trail Society

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## ADT Featured Trail

### Omaha - Council Bluffs Municipal Trails Connecting States and Governments



*ADT Society board members saluted key players in the trail linking of Omaha, Neb., to Council Bluffs, Iowa. (left to right) Reese Lukei, ADT Society chair of trail management, Steve Scarpello, Omaha Parks & Recreation, Eric Seaborg, Society president, Karen Anderson, National Park Service Rivers, Trails, & Conservation Assistance Program, John Batt, Council Bluffs Parks & Recreation, Gary Gebhardt, ADT Nebraska coordinator.*

When long-distance trails such as the American Discovery Trail cross county or state lines, things can get complicated. Each jurisdiction may have a different idea of the type or location of recreational paths they would like to provide for their citizens. But this challenge can also help foster a cooperative vision that brings great rewards for all parties.

Such was the case in the development of the Bob Kerrey Pedestrian Bridge linking Omaha, Neb., to Council Bluffs, Iowa, near where the American Discovery Trail Society held its 2009 annual membership and board meetings in September.

The result is not only an architecturally stunning bridge, but also the inspiration

for each community to develop a trail network that connects to it. This newly completed connection, a part of the ADT, removes the trail from a high-traffic bridge and replaces it with hiker- and biker-friendly passages that invite stops along the way for users to experience the cultural and scenic offerings these cities offer.

John Batt, Council Bluffs' parks, recreation and public property assistant director, says, "The new pedestrian bridge across the Missouri River has inspired additional trail projects and connects to loops on both sides of the river." Steve Scarpello, administrator for Omaha's Parks, Recreation and Public Property Department, agrees. He reports that the bridge "has sparked a lot of interest in

### Discovery Trails Legislation: Your Help Needed!

Legislation to officially designate the American Discovery Trail as a part of the National Trails System was just re-introduced in the U.S. Congress. Your help is urgently needed to ensure its passage. Please turn to page four to learn more about how the bill will help our trail and how you can help H.R. 4671, the National Discovery Trails Act, become law.

walking and biking." Adds Batt: "There is a whole variety of different age groups out on the trail."

This, in turn, creates demand for more trails. Over 30 miles of trail now connect with the bridge.

The benefits are not only in health and recreation. Scarpello notes: "Beyond trails, the new bridge has also created a reason for people to come to the riverfront. Events are held, the economy has improved, and things will continue to be developed. It will be spectacular."

This sense of civic pride and possibilities has brought an increased quality of life and recognition to the area. The August 28, 2009, issue of *USA Today* listed the Missouri River and this bridge as one of the top ten city rivers in the country, and called it "a one-of-a-kind design that looks like an art installation across the river."

The American Discovery Trail relies on this type of cooperation between states, counties, cities, and trail groups. In turn, by being a part of a larger entity, these organizations can reap the benefits of increased exposure, use, and availability of funding. Council Bluffs' Batt concurs: "We have always used being part of the ADT to help us secure funding." It's a classic case of a win-win situation.



*Bikers enjoy Missouri's Katy Trail, the longest rail-trail in the country and part of the ADT, offering 225 off-road miles. Photo courtesy of Mo. Dept. of Natural Resources*

## Going Cross Country— Biking on the Trail

*By Chuck Oestreich*

Almost from the beginning of American consciousness it leaps into the imagination: traveling across this mighty land.

Daniel Boone, Joliet and Marquette, Lewis and Clark, Thomas Stevens.

Wait. Thomas Stevens?

Yes, Thomas Stevens was the first person to travel across America on a bicycle, back in 1884 – 125 years ago. (He didn't stop there, by the way, but went on to pedal completely around the world. But that's another story.)

Perhaps he contributed to the American Discovery Trail's modern dream of doing just what he did – either by walking or bicycling – traveling from one end to the other of this great country on trails interconnected for some 6,800 miles.

But bicycling? Walking – even running – yes. But is it possible to hop on a bike and

pedal from Point Reyes to Cape Henlopen completely on trails?

The answer is: we're working on it. Actually – depending on your definition of trail – even for walking the dream is not completed yet. Many stretches of the ADT are still on roadways – little used ones for the most part – but not pristine trails through hill and vale.

I went cross-country some 20 years ago on a bike, but with Adventure Cycling, a company that sets up self-contained bike tours around America. My trip, through southern America, was one of the great experiences of my life. But it was marred in part by some difficult and horrendous roadway travel. We used very few trails. But when we did, it was biking heaven. Freedom

from traffic along with beautiful scenery was like going downhill with a tailwind – extraordinary!

That experience led me to the ADT and its promise of trails across America.

- Trails for both hiking and biking.
- Trails developed enough to permit comfortable travel for a fully loaded touring bike.
- Trails connected for the full 6,800 miles.

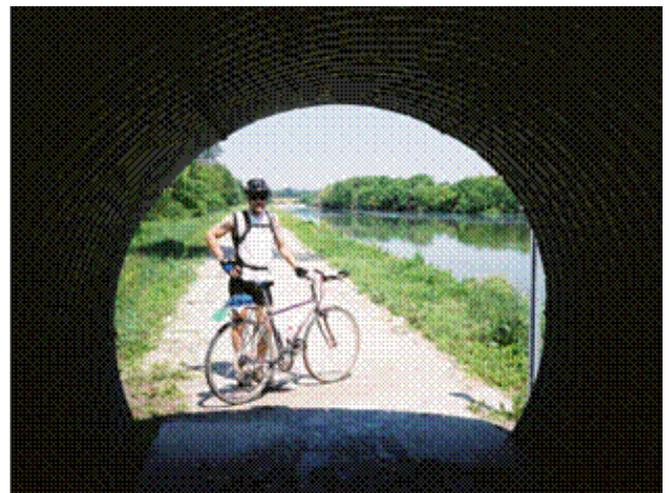
What a dream!

But I'm realistic. Trails are not built in a day. And in places they will be very difficult to complete. We will have to use roadways for the foreseeable future.

But the dream is still out there. That long-lasting American dream of personally measuring the breadth and extent of this country by human power alone is a part of our cultural consciousness.

Our imaginations leap in sync with our pioneers, including Thomas Stevens. Let's dream that some time in the future we can follow his 125-year-old pedal journey – this time on one trail, the American Discovery Trail.

*Chuck Oestreich is the ADT Northern Illinois state coordinator and the Society's bicycle committee chair.*



*The Hennepin Canal Trail in Northern Illinois is framed by one of its culverts. Photo courtesy of Chuck Oestreich*

## Trail News

### California shows the way

On East Bay Regional Park District and nearby lands, California trail enthusiasts recently installed signs on many of the trails to help users find their way. In addition, four kiosks will be placed at major trail junctions or trailheads.

In the Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta area, between Sacramento and San Francisco Bay, a new Delta Trails Coalition was created. Its goals are to develop better off-road routes across the state, protect the Delta, and create more recreational opportunities for central California residents.

The ADT Society is represented on the board by California state coordinator John Fazel. He says: "Everyone sees the American Discovery Trail as the backbone of a strong, viable trail that will bring an off-road trail from Sacramento to the East Bay and San Francisco region."

They plan to get almost all of the ADT off the Delta roads, which would make the California portion virtually 100% off-road.

### Goodbye to SWOTA

The South Western Ohio Trails Association has decided to disband, so the American Discovery Trail Society sends a note of thanks to the SWOTA for its support of the ADT over the years. SWOTA was active in improving, marking, and promoting the ADT in their area, bringing visibility to our trail.

### Multiple funds for Iowa

Large trail projects can require a lot of money, so supporters need to seek funding from a variety of sources. When the Iowa Department of Natural Resources awarded \$367,000 in a Resource Enhancement and Protection grant to expand the Raccoon River Valley Trail (RRVT) in Iowa, the Iowa Department of Transportation responded by adding \$484,995 to the project. Both of these contributions were a result of a \$1.6 million grant from Vision Iowa that required an \$850,000 match. Trail users kicked in an additional \$40,470, and the



Pat Hayes staffed the American Discovery Trail display at GearFest 2009, where hundreds of visitors learned about the ADT. Photo courtesy of Pat Hayes

Iowa Natural Heritage Foundation raised \$35,000.

Put them all together and they spell millions of dollars for trails in Iowa. The money will be used to construct a new 33-mile portion of the RRVT that will be an alternate route of the American Discovery Trail.

Some construction is already under way in the Dawson and Perry areas and more paving is expected as weather allows. Once completed, the RRVT will consist of 89 miles of paved trail, one of the nation's longest paved loop trails.

Also, the Cedar Valley Nature Trail received \$250,000 from the Iowa Department of Transportation for construction of a bridge in McFarlane Park, near La Porte City.

### Ohio Celebrates Trails

By Pat Hayes

The Junction TrailFest in Milford, Ohio, is an annual event that celebrates the convergence of eight long-distance hiking,

biking, and paddling trails. It was held Sept. 26 under a threatening sky.

Speakers included the North Country National Scenic Trail's Joan Young, author of *One Woman's Journey on the North Country Trail*; Chris McIntyre, who spoke on the Buckeye Trail's 50th anniversary; and Pat Hayes, who described the American Discovery Trail.

Hayes also represented the ADT Society at GearFest 2009 on Oct. 3 at Eastwood MetroPark in Dayton. With several thousand visitors annually, GearFest is recognized as the premier festival celebrating outdoor culture in the Midwest.

The event included demonstrations by the MBS Mountain Boarding Team, 216 Bike Trails Team, Mad River Mountain Snowboarding, and professional kayakers at the pool.

A multitude of activities at the festival invited participation. Festival-goers participated in the Courteous Mass Bike Ride, climbing wall, youth

*(Continued on page 6, column 3)*

## National Discovery Trails Act, H.R. 4671

Our legislative effort to add a new category of trails called National Discovery Trails to the National Trails System Act gained new life when Reps. John Sarbanes of Maryland and Jeff Fortenberry of Nebraska introduced H.R. 4671, the National Discovery Trails Act. The bill would designate the American Discovery Trail as the first of these new trails.

The sponsors, one a Democrat and one a Republican, are sending a "Dear Colleague" letter to all 435 members of the House of Representatives inviting them to become cosponsors of H.R. 4671 and assist them in creating a nationwide system of interconnected pathways with the American Discovery Trail as its backbone. Ellen Dudley, ADT Society vice president, notes that "the national discovery trails legislation has always been a bipartisan issue, and we have always sought and welcomed co-sponsors from both parties." This could be the year that the legislation passes both the House and the Senate, **if we can demonstrate enough grassroots support.**

**You can help!** Ask your representative to become a co-sponsor of H.R. 4671. The ADTS website – [www.discoverytrail.org/news/issues](http://www.discoverytrail.org/news/issues) – contains information to help you do just that, including how to contact your representative and sample letters that you can modify to add your personal touch. You can view H.R. 4671 and get your representative's address at [www.house.gov](http://www.house.gov). Hard copy letters or phone calls often receive more attention than e-mails, but a quick e-mail letter can also help if that is all you have time to do. Ask your friends and family to do the same. The more people who contact their representatives, the better our chances.

### Why We Need this Legislation

Here are the basics on this important legislation to help you craft your letter to your member of Congress. Let's all work together to make 2010 the year this legislation passes!

#### *Why support the National Discovery Trail Act?*

The American Discovery Trail benefits local areas by attracting tourist dollars and bringing national visibility.

It benefits the country by connecting five national scenic, 12 national historic, and 34 national recreation trails. It is the backbone of the national trails system.

It benefits our citizens' health by providing outdoor opportunities to keep fit, burn calories, and fight obesity. It brings a national trail to a huge population because some 32 million people live within 20 miles of the trail.

The ADT is a public-private partnership that is cost-effective with the vast majority of the work being done by volunteers.

The presence of the ADT has resulted in many local trails being developed.

#### *What does the act do?*

It amends the National Trails System Act to create a new category of long-distance trails called national discovery trails and designates the ADT as the first trail under that category.

#### *Why create a new category of national trails?*

A National Park Service study recommended this because the American Discovery Trail fills an important spot in the National Trails System but it doesn't fit into the traditional categories of national scenic or national historic trail. Discovery trails are different because they emphasize accessibility to more people by deliberate routing through small towns and major metropolitan areas, providing trails close to the homes of all Americans.

#### *Why do we want this designation?*

We need the designation to fully mark the ADT. Without it, we are in legal limbo and many federal and other land managers will not allow us to mark the trail on lands they administer.

This designation adds legitimacy and visibility to the ADT. Becoming part of the National Trails System will enhance its eligibility for technical assistance from the National Park Service Rivers, Trails, and Conservation Assistance Program.

The legislation is not a question of land acquisition, but of designation and recognition. The American Discovery Trail follows existing trails, country lanes, and towpaths, which are already maintained by local, state, and federal governments. It is already almost entirely on public land. The few exceptions are by landowner invitation on existing rights-of-way or agreement, such as Indiana's Cardinal Greenway, which is owned by a non-profit organization with the mission of making the trail accessible to the public.

It brings unique qualities to the National Trails System by supplying connections that are currently missing.

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## Cross-Country Hikers Recall Ohio Experience

By Joyce Cottrell

There's a place called the American Discovery Trail and my husband, Pete, and I can't get enough of it! After backpacking coast-to-coast on the Southern Route in 2002 and from Cincinnati to Denver on the Northern Route in 2007, we had a magical reunion with the American Discovery Trail in 2009. For the third time we were on the ADT, this time backpacking the entire Ohio Buckeye Trail during its 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary.

We started from the home of our friends, Mike and Connie Snyder, of Richmondale. Their welcome was full of chitchat and laughter, awesome meals, and powerful support for the total trail.

Scioto Valley's freshly planted rich fields bordered our first steps. How is it we could clearly remember the embracing wood trail from our last trip and forget the intense muscle-burning steep hills?

Lovely Mapleberry Farm still hangs its sign but no longer sells. Pike Lake nestles perfectly in its forest. Amish children sold bread for our lunch, while our backpacks, placed near their buggies, showed our different means of travel. Serpent Mound and Fort Hill are still spectacular preservations but suffer from state funding cuts. Nonetheless, we were moved by the historic grounds and an enchanted cliff walk. Shawnee Forest was devastated by fire. The Counterfeit House entices one to enter, but a lack of funds closed its door to visitors. History disappearing is more than sad. Gemmer Tavern and Campground still serves great food but closed its camping facilities.

Daily we toured by painted quilt barns, touched the old stone walls, saw Underground Railroad homes, walked with wildlife, and felt the wonder of being outside every day in Ohio.

Yes, changes in the trail, the businesses and residential areas, and overall environment were many, but our sweet memories would surface constantly.



*Heading toward Smoke Rise Ranch along the Buckeye Trail and ADT in Ohio.*

Photo courtesy of Joyce & Peter Cottrell

This was so much more than just a walk.

Oh, the people! The Caraways gave us a shelter during a rainstorm and dined us on T-bone steak. Bottle-feeding calves and watching artificial insemination of a cow were trail highlights at the Vogels. There was the kindness of a gentleman in Williamsburg and the hospitality of the Riverside Coffee Mill in Batavia. These people and so many more are the definition of kindness in America.

Our slow saunter in Cincinnati in the morning allowed us to soak in architecture, history, vendors, shoppers, and art, modern and old. Bart Rosenberg greeted us and his treat was his stories of the city and the Graeters ice cream cones (our first). How special is that! Eden Park, the Ohio River, the steamboats and barges were our lunch spot. All of these were amazing discoveries.

Our friends, the Sondermans, whisked us to their home for our first day off. Peaceful rest, lots of food, and a personal tour of Cincinnati was only a part of their exceptional gift to us.

The American Discovery Trail was temporarily interrupted as we completed our Buckeye Trail thru-hike in the tremen-

dously kind hands of Pat and Mary Hayes and the entire Buckeye Trail Association. This sensational trek is a separate story for some other time.

As we approached Chesterhill, we were excited to be back on the American Discovery Trail. At Shew's Orchard we placed our tent in the hay barn. The site was complete with a view. In the days that followed, there were plenty of sheep, pigs, goats, donkeys, and mules, and, of course, cows! Water-side at Burr Oak Lake, on lovely single-track trails, we befriended a fisherman versed in boats, fish, and water plants. By contrast, the hands at the Smoke Rise Ranch instructed us about horses, riding, and animal care.

A trip on the trail is not complete without a visit to Shawnee's Café on a rainy day. Local folks have high-spirited humor and an earnest outlook on life. What a lift! Old Man's Cave is a bold natural playground. We did not feel the muscle burn on the many rock stairs or from navigating in and out of the caves. We had major fun!

On one of our last nights, we had our tent up in front of Hopewell Church and drew a crowd. Handshakes and sharing stories took us into the night. A Buckeye Trail team advanced us with trail maintenance, along with the Snyders, at Tar Hollow State Park.

Cheerfully, we went back "home" into the kind hands of the Snyders who spoiled us beyond words. We finished where we began. This day took us from the towering hill overlooking the Scioto Valley in its full glory, to its rich fields. The crops were in harvest. Fliers were hang-gliding. A new season had begun. So much had changed, and so much was the same.

Surrounded by friends and back-dropped by a beautiful environment, with our treasure chest full of trail memories, our hearts were full. We celebrated. We discovered America once again.

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### Taking it a step at a time



*There are a multitude of ways to enjoy the American Discovery Trail, from an all-at-once thru-hike, to an afternoon bicycle ride, to tackling the trail one state at a time. This box turtle has decided to take the slow approach and see everything along the way.*

Photo courtesy of Jim Shaner

### Ohio Celebrates Trails

*(Continued from page 3)*

adventure zone, kayaking on the Mad River, Mad River Bike Trail Ride, Buckeye Trail hike along the Mad River, geocaching, disc golf, fishing, and camping.

Competitions included kayak fishing casting, freestyle snowboard, boater cross, a river rescue challenge, speed climbing, a cross-country mountain bike race, and disc golf.

Several hundred attendees stopped by the ADT Society display to pick up brochures and ask questions. Those people who were unfamiliar with the American Discovery Trail now know about it, the Society, and where to go for more information.

*Pat Hayes is the ADT state coordinator for Ohio.*



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