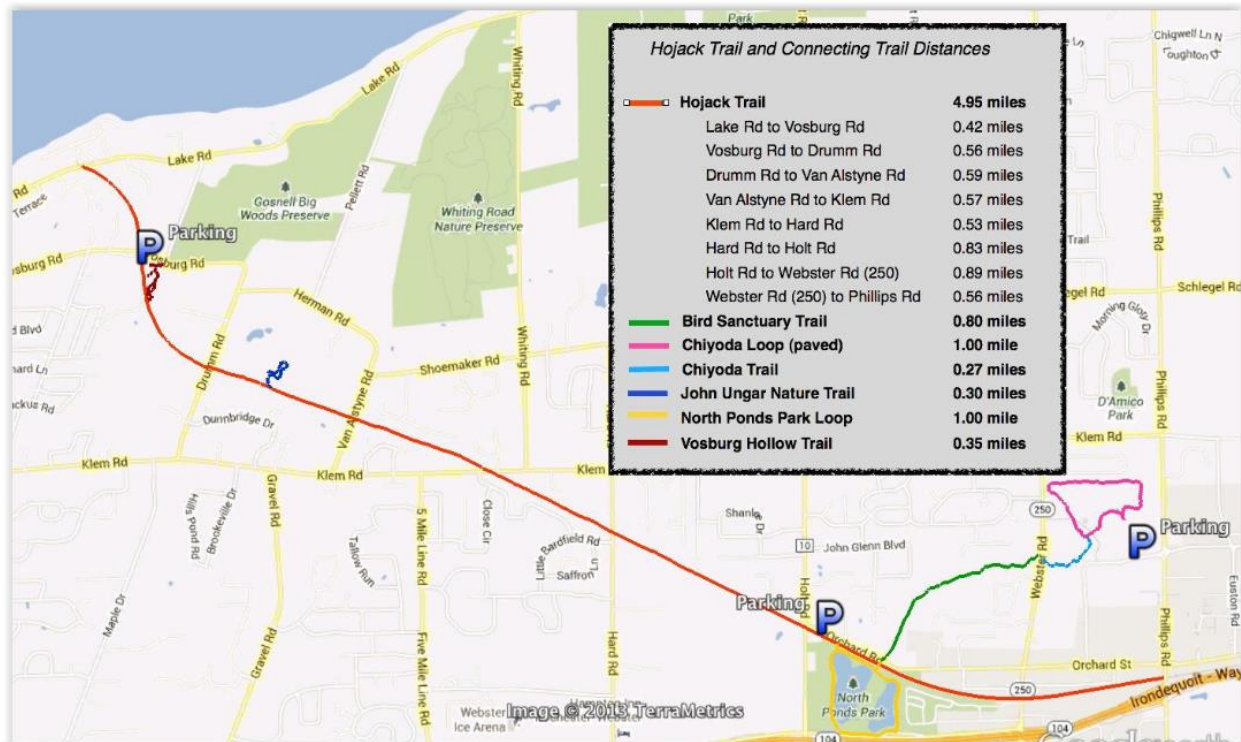




Friends of Webster Trails

FWT Newsletter - Fall 2020



Oldest and Longest Trail – Learn more about it.

Upcoming Events

November 7th - Hot Cocoa Hike

Whiting Road NP -7-9 pm See website for details.

November 14th – Annual Meeting

Hickory Bark NP 3-5 pm See website for details

President’s Column – Anna Taylor

What a ride 2020 has been. I remain thankful for the Friends of Webster Trails, and for the beautiful open spaces and trails we have here in Webster which have been an invaluable resource in helping us get through these challenging times. FWT had planned many community outreach activities for 2020. We were looking forward to participating in local festivals and family focused town events to promote our group/mission. We had planned on continuing our efforts with our shared trail workdays, partnering with other community groups, organizations and individuals for our monthly Trail Work Parties. It was clear with our first Zoom Board Meeting that any plans we had for the year would be significantly changed, if we were able to pursue them at all. I am happy to report, with the Board working together, we succeeded in following through on many of our goals for 2020, regardless of plan changes and the pandemic.

First, Existing Trail Maintenance: we chose to postpone our

shared workdays for 2020, safety being our top priority and in following NYS guidelines limiting large group gatherings. As you know, as you have been on our trails, they remain in excellent condition. This has been the result of the incredible work of our Trails Stewards. This year we have had to lean on them, and they have far exceeded any of our expectations. Thank you to our Trail Stewards!

If you follow us on Facebook, you have noticed that we were able to move forward with a few trail workdays in the last couple months. As NYS Covid restrictions have lessened, the Board decided to move forward with priority projects, keeping to small groups of our board members only. Projects this year included work at Four Mile Creek Preserve, John Ungar Trail and Chiyoda Trail. These were very rewarding projects, where improvements were significant. Thank you again to our Trail Stewards for identifying areas of greatest need, our Board members for diving into the projects, and to our Trails Chair Craig Hurlbut for navigating us through these efforts this year.

Second goal, building new trails: During the spring and summer we continued to plan the new trail network for the Open Space along State Road between Salt Road and the Phillips Road. In our September Board meeting we were excited to approve a new Eagle Scout Project for this trail, the scout’s proposal will be a significant first step in the development of this new trail. We look forward to seeing his project come to life through the

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work of the Scouts. Thank you to Eric Turberg and Hal Harris for your leadership on the development of this new trail.

Third goal promote FWT. Even though we were unable to participate in most community events as planned this year, we were able to move forward with a couple: The Scavenger Hunt at North Ponds Parks, and our upcoming Hot Coco Hike (in a modified format). See our website for details. With new beginnings this year, as my first year as Board President, we reached out to our new Commissioner of Parks and Recreation, Chris Bilow and Parks Director, Glenn Morrell to introduce ourselves, establish our relationship and communication paths between our organizations. We look forward to regular engagement with them and working to support each other in our shared goals moving forward. We also decided to participate in an exciting project presented to us by the Webster Library. As part of their Let's Explore Webster! video series, they have chosen to highlight our trails, and have asked for our input. We look forward to working with the library on their video series. We will be coordinating with them on the first few trail videos in the months of October and November and completing the series in 2021. Be sure to keep an eye out on our Facebook page and Website for these videos, as we will share them there.

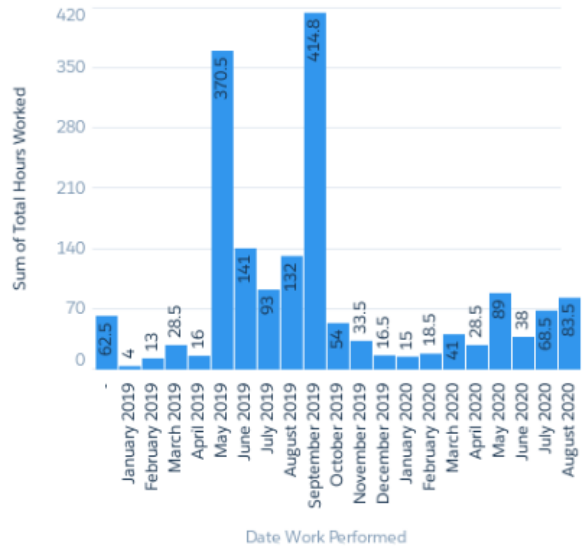
As we look back on 2020, we have heard from many people thanking us for our good work and expressing interest in getting involved. If you happen to meet people who express this same interest suggest they become a member, guide them to our website and Facebook page, suggest participation on our board or mention our monthly trail work parties.

Thank you to the Board, the Trail Stewards, and you, our Members. It has been a pleasure being your Board President this year and as always, I am amazed by all that you do.

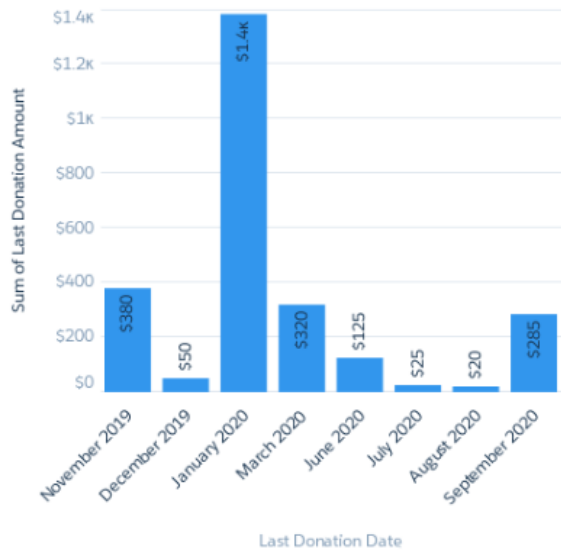
Membership News - Denise Bilsback



FWT Work Hours by Month



FWT Donations Last 12 Months



Treasurer’s Report – Bill Polito

Friends of Webster Trails		
For: Sep 2020		
	YTD	YTD Prior Yr
Donations		
Memberships - PayPal	\$1,421	\$1,841
Memberships - Checks	\$1,445	\$1,365
Amazon	\$58	\$42
United Way		
Scavenger Hunt	\$205	
Interest Earned on Saving	\$3	
United Church of Christ		
Roc Trails	\$1,000	\$2,500
Roc & Soul		\$200
Webster Library		\$2,805
Total Donations	\$4,132	\$8,753
Expenses:		
Community Arts Day		(\$20)
IRS Filing Fee	(\$40)	(\$40)
Supplies	(\$485)	(\$9,447)
McAllister sign	(\$30)	
PayPal Fees	(\$60)	(\$82)
Wegman's, Chipotle, Guidas		(\$83)
Site 5		(\$215)
Papa Reggios		(\$233)
Total Expenses	(\$615)	(\$10,120)
Net Cash Movement	\$3,517	(\$1,367)

Trails Chairman Report – Craig Hurlbut

What a year it has been for everyone! I cannot imagine anyone who has not been affected by Covid-19 and all its related problems. Everyone in our organization hopes that you are healthy and well.

In past years we partnered with other organizations to do trail work. Due to Covid this year we limited our work teams to only people in the FWT organization. This reduced the number of projects however we still made progress on a few relatively small projects. Even though the teams were smaller we made up for that with enthusiasm! Here is what we accomplished.

Four Mile Creek

On July 25 we arrived at the trailhead to find a mound of gravel and wood chips provided by the Town of Webster. The gravel was moved onto the trail in wet spots. The wood chips now cover the trail from the parking lot for as far as we could go.

As shown below on the red trail there is a “cutover” that bisects the loop. Hikers were barely able to get through here because of brush and fallen trees. We cleared this up and you

can now enjoy a red trail short cut!



FMCP steward, Dennis Kuhn wants to point out the refresh of the kiosk material and the revised fishing regulations.

John Ungar Nature Trail

See Steward Norma Platt’s article about JUNT.

Chiyoda Trail

The Town of Webster came through in a big way by dumping 12 yards of gravel on this trail. It is a big effort to move this much gravel by wheelbarrow over a ¼ mile trail but on October 3 we had some motivated workers. The gravel was spread in wet spots and over drainpipes, and a new drainpipe was laid to help drainage.



Whiting Road Nature Preserve

It is an ongoing effort to maintain our most popular trails at WRNP. You will find replacement culverts on the orange trail along with new drainage ditches. Also, stone was added to the orange, pink, and black trails. The trimming back of the trails happens on a regular basis.

Hojack Trail

The Town did a lot of work on the stretch between Klem Road and Van Alstyne. It used to be awfully muddy in that area and hikers had to go way off the trail to get around the water and mud. They spread stone over much of the trail and this should improve it a lot. We are grateful for their efforts. We have

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had feedback that the stones are quite large and sharp, discouraging cyclists and hikers, and this has been brought to the Town's attention. FWT is having ongoing discussions with the Town about the Hojack. See article about the trail elsewhere in this newsletter.

One unexpected consequence of Covid is that many people are out on the trails, much more than in the past. Quarantines have kept people at home and being outside reduces the risk of getting the virus. We have seen the volume of hikers and cyclists increasing throughout the summer. It seems the pandemic may change certain aspects of our lives going forward and perhaps more trail usage is the new normal.

Like pretty much everyone these days FWT is looking forward to 2021 and hoping we need not worry about Covid. Please look for our Spring newsletter and news of our 2021 trail work!

Social Media – Anna Taylor

Staying connected with our community and supporting our mission, that is the goal of our engagement on social media. In 2020 we increased our number of followers on Facebook from 590 to 694 to date. Our Instagram followers have increased from 143 in January to 178 today. It is a pleasure getting comments from our followers. Our posts focus on highlighting our trails with current photos, and updates on our events and Trail Work Parties. Primarily our feedback from our followers has been comments regarding their love and enthusiasm for our trails. We have heard back with posts regarding trees down on the trails, and issues of concern. We were also happy to connect with a New Trail Steward for one of our trails on Facebook. I would like to thank all who have reached out to us. Keep your comments and messages coming.

Moving forward, as we close out 2020, I encourage you to Follow us on Facebook and Instagram and Like our pages. Please tell your friends to do the same. Lastly, we would love to have a new volunteer join us as Social Media Coordinator. It has been my pleasure to take on this role and keep up our presence in the digital world. I love doing it; however, it would be wonderful to get new creative ideas and energy for our posts. This is a volunteer position, and if you love our Webster Trails, enjoy taking and sharing photos, and are happy to work with the great team on our board, reach out to me regarding the details on how to get involved. It might also be the perfect position for a college student who is studying media or a similar discipline. If you know anyone who you think might be interested, please pass on this information.

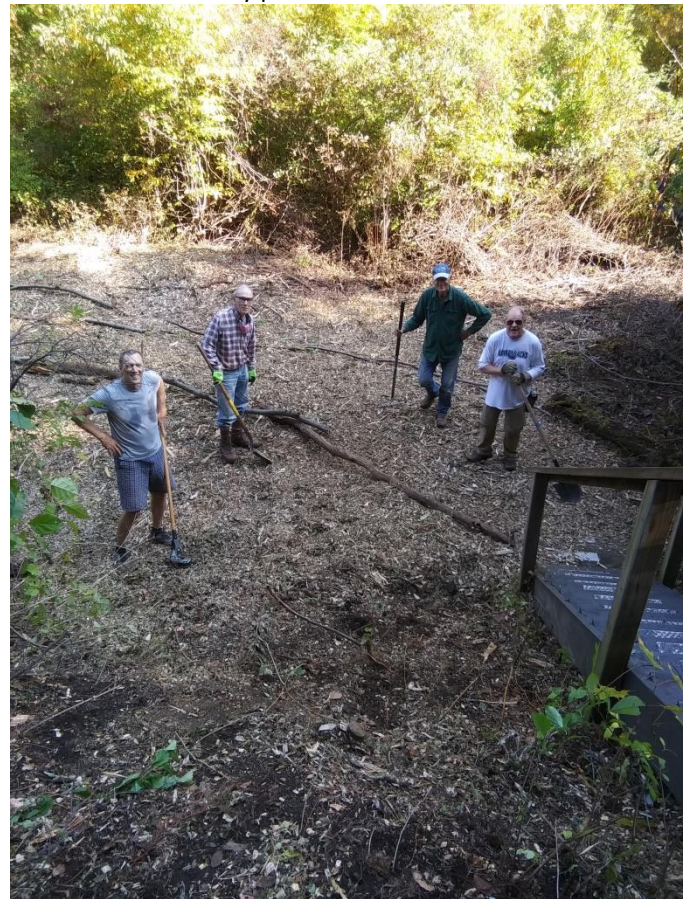
Hickory Bark Woods Trail – Sharon Galbraith

Nothing of significance to report. A large tree came down but did not impact the boardwalk. I will be planting spice bushes shortly. There is a lot of trail use. Every time I go someone else is either coming or going. Two maples near the beginning of the trail are scarlet - lovely.

John Ungar Nature Trail - Norma Platt

The John Ungar Nature Trail (JUNT) is off the Hojack Trail between Drumm and Van Alstyne Road. Until now, entry was gained by descending ~20 feet down a sturdy stairway and passing ~30 ft. through a narrow path that hugged the edge of the old RR. By the end of the season bushes and weeds made this section of the trail nearly impassable.

Several members of the FWT board worked with the Glenn Morrell & the Town of Webster to make this entrance more accessible. We cleared 30 feet from the edge of the embankment for about 50 feet, moving the brush up to the Hojack. Glenn arranged for a chipper to shred the brush. We used these chips as well as 6 yards of the mulch to cover newly cleared area and entry path.



We hope that users of the Hojack will be tempted to use JUNT and enjoy one of Webster's hidden gems!

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State Road Nature Preserve (SRNP) – Hal Harris

A brief update on the SRNP. You may recall that Town acquired this 84 acre open space property as a gift from the Arbor Creek developer. It includes several retention ponds, extensive wetlands and some wooded areas. Four Mile Creek, fairly small at this point, bisects the Preserve running from the south west corner to the north east corner. A point of interest is a small farm pond located in the woods near State Road.

This fall the developer has completed a walking trail along the west side of the creek. Without public parking, this trail is currently available primarily to Arbor Creek residents and the neighborhood. FWT is working to develop a trail system in the preserve east of the creek. Although slowed by the pandemic, we have roughed in a trail from State Road to the pond. This fall an Eagle Scout candidate is building a bridge over the pond's outlet. Our plan for next year is to build a trail from the pond to the east side of the creek, a trail along the east side of the creek and to finish the trail in from State Road where we expect the Town to construct a small parking lot for public access. We also plan for a bridge across the creek to connect the east and west trail systems. Our future plan is to further expand the eastside trail system to one or two loop trails. This will be a major challenge due to the extensive wetlands and limited "high ground" for sustainable trail. Stay tuned!

FWT Habitat Preservation Committee - Norma Platt Habitat Preservation 2020 : Revisiting Considerations for Project Selection

For FWT Habitat work, 2020 has been a time for contemplation, as opposed to action. Field work was halted because of COVID-19 and concern for the health of our volunteers. No congenial gatherings to enjoy our meaningful work in the out of doors.

We've missed the opportunity to limit problems before they grow. Here's an excerpt from a 2013 FWT newsletter. It deals with project selection and working on problems when their scope is manageable.....

EXCERPT: Here are some of the factors that we consider when we're thinking about a project for habitat preservation.

What is the type of project? For FWT, we've broken it down into two areas: maintenance of meadows and removal/control of invasive plant species.

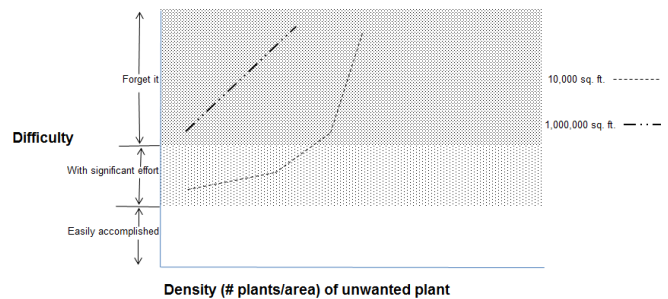
In meadow maintenance, we want to create areas that please the eye (a judgment call) and provide habitat for birds, butterflies, flowers and grasses.

For removal/control of invasive species, we want to remove invasive/non-native plants that crowd out other native plants. We want to maintain the balance that allows species that depend on the native plants to find what they need to live.

What goes into Project Selection? What are the resources at hand, and are they matched with the scope of the project? How will we clean up after the project? What happens after the project? Do we have permission to do the work and is it legal and safe?

Resources available to FWT are bodies to do the work (brawn, brains, persistence), mowing (courtesy of the Town) and herbicides.

The difficulty of a project (vertical axis on the graph below) increases as the invasive's population density increases (horizontal axis). Project difficulty also increases as the area we're working on increases (the two different lines). Some projects are simply too large to do, given the resources at hand.

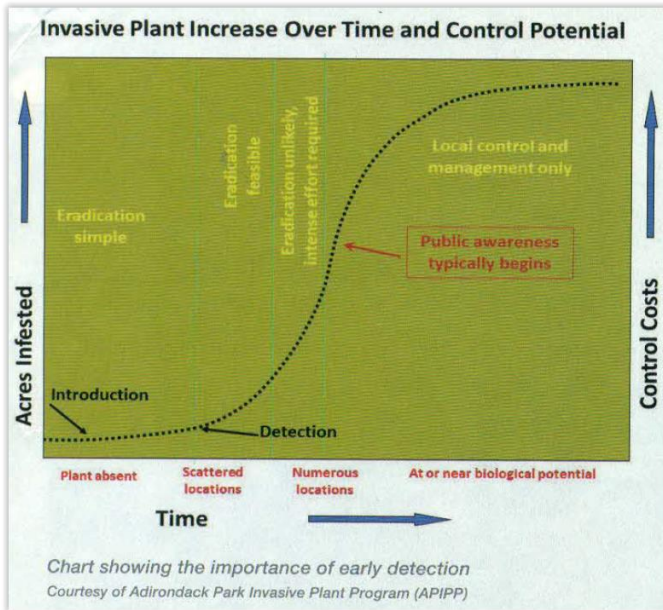


After a job, we need to make sure the area is presentable. For example, brush piles must be moved out of sight or reduced in size.

After a job is completed, we need to make provisions for continuing and long-term care. We can plant native plants, mow to keep the area open, and return to do spot maintenance.

Before anything happens we need to make sure that the work is OK with the Town and the Genesee Land Trust (GLT, who holds the conservation easement in the Big Woods).

So that's what appeared in 2013. Since then, I've seen another graph with an alternative presentation of the same considerations which is shown below.



The Hojack Trail – Past, Present and Future – J. Boettcher

The Hojack Trail is the longest trail (5 miles) in the Webster Open Space System. It is an example of a rail-to-trail conversion currently extending from Phillips Road to Lake Road. The rail line was built in the 1870s, operated for 100 years during which time it boosted our local economy greatly.

At the time of the construction of the Hojack line, the building of railroads was pretty advanced technology. Attention to grade and stability of the bed would have been high priority. Related to this would have been attention to the handling of surface water. I am certain that standing water would have not been tolerated on the road bed.

So why are there problems with mud and standing water on the Hojack trail now? Up to a few months ago, the section between Klem Road and Van Alstyne Road was impassable by bike for most of the year. Water would accumulate in several sections leading to large and deep muddy areas. There are several causes for this such as lack of maintenance of the drainage paths and adjacent residential development.

In 2018, the Friends of Webster Trails applied for a \$50,000 grant to have a contractor fix this problem but we were not awarded the grant.

This year the Webster Highway Department did a great job at fixing several of the problems. In the area near Klem Road, they removed debris alongside the trail which was preventing drainage. Further to the North, they raised a portion of the trail with stone over fabric. Finally, in the area of Van Alstyne Road, they improved and reworked the drainage ditches. This

also fixed similar problems on the trail just to the North, between Van Alstyne and Drum. We owe a big thanks to the Highway folks.

In the future other problems with the trail will no doubt be found but, with community support, solutions can be found. So why should we do this? It is the longest trail in Webster and my suspicion is that it is the most popular. The trail runs through the middle of our community could be a destination for visitors. In addition, I would like to suggest the following.

The long distance of the Hojack Trail suggests a few community activities. One of these is a race from one end to another. This would require some crosswalk monitors and a shuttle service. The race would be most conveniently started from Phillips road and terminating at Lake Road. An associated activity would be simply the completion of the 5 mile walk. Both could be held on the same day in something like a Hojack Trail celebration day.

Another idea would be to make use of the trail for an historic walk. There is quite a bit of history near the trail in the Village of Webster. Of course, most of the structures have been lost or dismantled but the Village Museum could supply visual aids. There are residents active in the community who played on the tracks and talk of hitching rides to the candy store in Forest Lawn. Maybe they could be persuaded to share their memories. Then there is the background of the awful accident that occurred in Forest Lawn. There is a lot to interest history buffs.

Another aspect would be the engineering of the trail. Constructed mostly by hand or with steam, the trail traverses a flat section until van Alstyne but after that it crosses Shipbuilders Creek a number of times with culverts (some elaborate) and channels to control the waterway. Also, the terrain as one nears Lake Ontario is quite varied. How did the engineers and planners layout the trail so as to provide the gentle grade needed for the railroad? What tools did they use at the end of the 19th century when lasers and GPS were still years away. Perhaps this could be a module for some high school math or science class.

These ideas have been running around in my head for a few months. Would you be interested in making them happen? Get in touch with me.

Winter Projects for FWT – J. Boettcher

Looking for something to do over the long winter or want to get more involved in the community and FWT? How about these opportunities?

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From President Anna Taylor, we would love to have a new volunteer join us as SOCIAL MEDIA COORDINATOR.

FWT REALLY NEEDS A SECRETARY. We meet monthly and need someone to keep track of where we are and remind us. An organized person with some patience and interested in learning about FWT is needed. Contact Anna.

Webster Public Library has produced some NICE VIDEOS OF AREAS IN WEBSTER. They are looking for help from the FWT to feature more of our trails. The short trails are relatively easy to advise but the longer trails in Gosnell, Whiting, and Four Mile Creek need someone to break them down into features and points of interest. WPL has the video expertise but what is needed is the knowledge of the trail.

Our TRAIL MAPS are very popular with the community and we keep adding to and changing them. We need someone who knows how to capture the trails via GPS and translate this in to a path in Google Earth or other mapping system.

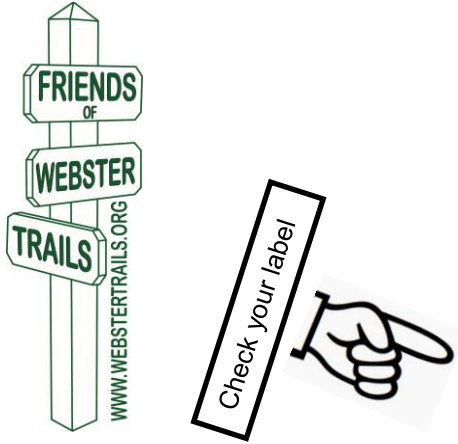
As might be apparent from this newsletter, the Open Space areas of Webster are a rich source of information for the community. The Board has not worked out the details but we think we need an EDUCATIONAL LIAISON to the Library, Schools and Parks and Recreation looking for opportunities to communicate.

Finally, our trail maps are much appreciated but I was wondering if we could offer something like a TRAIL HANDBOOK. Aside from length of the trail perhaps some indication of difficulty, elevation change, hazards, points of interest, best times of year to go or to avoid, handicap accessibility, when the trail was established, bike access, etc. In short a user guide to the trail to help people enjoy and better appreciate. We could start with a paragraph for the website and work up from there.

FWT Board 2020

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Friends of Webster Trails
Webster Community Center
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Friends of Webster Trails advocates for the preservation of the natural character of Webster's open space lands. We promote through sensible management, education, and low-impact access. We advise the Parks and Recreation Department and assist by planning, maintaining and promoting recreation trails in the Town of Webster.

The Friends of Webster Trails newsletter is published each Spring and Fall

Editor: John Boettcher

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