

River to River Trail Society Newsletter

August 17, 2009

And Report to the American Discovery Trail

The River to River Trail Society has been a participant in the Development of the American Discovery Trail from an early stage. Society Chairman John O'Dell has been a Board Member and Officer and has attended meeting since approximately 1995. He is also a member of the Illinois State Greenways and Trails Council that guides Trail Development in the State.

The Society provides a guidebook for River to River Trail users, shuttle and information services and on many occasions provides full service to for the needs of through hikers involving the providing food, telephone and the coordination of media events and other activities. The society is in the process of revising their trail guide which should be completed before the first of the year. Although we have not begun the process of submitting a trail revision to the ADT Society, there are some changes to the River to River Trail in the Shawnee Forest. The one that will be the most troublesome will be the one going through Lusk Creek.

The Trail Society has held a National Trails Day Event every year since the beginning of the event. At this years event, trail society chair John O'Dell announced that he will be stepping out of the Chair and appointed Trail Boss Eric Johnson to be the succeeding chair. Other officers will be Gillum Ferguson, recently retired attorney from the Chicago Federal Court, and C. Mart Watson, practicing attorney and City Attorney for Eldorado, Illinois. They are all hike leaders for the Society. With such good people to help the cause, we look for a strengthening of the organization and an increase in the number of trail users in the future.

The event of the year occurred January 8th, when an inland hurricane occurred and caused massive blow down of trails and other wind damage across in the towns in Southern Illinois, and especially in the Shawnee. The trials in our area were closed for a relatively short time, but hanging tree limbs euphemistically called widow makers by the Forest Service continue to be a problem. The Forest service requested and received some grants for the clean up, and the Trail Society was there to help, and will continue to do so in the future. Although most trails are now open, there are still some that aren't. Long Hikers on the River to River Trail should contact the state coordinator for problem areas.

The Forest Service is also improving the trail, making a hard surface for much of the River to River, and also making it more attractive. We have been locating some new trails close to the River to River and the ADT that are gorgeous. They could be considered enhancements to the R2R .

The Society still provides two or more hiking schedules during the year, with an increasing number of participants and pick up hikes. We estimate that the Society hosted free hikes to over 600 people this year. Most people catch our web page on www.rivertorivertrail.com or www.shawneetourism.com.

We sell our trail guides via the internet who get our address from the web page. We are virtually sold out of our third edition. Orders and calls for information has virtually stopped when people realized that the trails were impassible and dangerous.

The local tourism board filmed a thirty minute DVD showing a lot of hiking with the ADT and River to River Trail as a feature. The video has been advertised over commercial and public television stations in the midwest.

John O'Dell Chairman
River to River Trail Society
Illinois Hiking Society