

Farmington Valley Trails Council *Greenway News*

Dedicated to building, maintaining and beautifying multi-use trails

April 2021 – Volume 21, Issue 1



Membership Benefits

The FVTC is only as strong as its membership.

If you are not a member, please consider joining us today.

Why join the Farmington Valley Trails Council? Here are a few reasons:

- **Tireless advocacy for new trails and connections.**
 - **Maintenance and beautification of existing trails.**
 - **Website, news-letters, folding maps, and informational papers.**
 - **Volunteer opportunities like Clean-Up Day.**
 - **Regular rides.**
- And so much more!**

President's Letter: Trail Usage Boosted in 2020; Support FVTC Through Membership

By Barbara Collins, President, FVTC

In one way, 2020 was a very good year: many people were introduced to the Farmington Canal Heritage Trail (FCHT). The FCHT runs nearly continuously from New Haven to the Massachusetts border. One day soon, its northern endpoint will be Northampton, Mass. More than 40 years ago, Farmington Valley Trails Council (FVTC) founder Preston Reed envisioned our trail and the value it would provide to everyone.

In 2020, all sections of the trail were discovered by people who, tired of sitting at home, realized that they could safely walk, run and bike on the trail while staying socially distant. It was the perfect place and yes it was crowded. Luckily, the large majority complied with the COVID rules. We reminded folks who did not follow these rules of the safety protocols on our website (<https://fchtrail.org>) and Facebook page ([FVTrailsCouncil](https://www.facebook.com/FVTrailsCouncil))

Sadly, the pandemic meant cancellation of all our rides, along with our Expo and Clean Up day. We missed getting together with our members, but as always, safety was our priority. Now 2021 has finally brought us vaccines, which will allow more freedom of movement to an ever-increasing cohort. However, it will take a few more months of reduced COVID infection rates for FVTC to feel safe holding events. Therefore there will be no 2021 Expo or Clean-up Day. Our hope is to start hosting rides in June. Watch our website and emails for details as the date gets closer.

Even though our events were canceled, the work of FVTC continued. The Board meets monthly via Zoom to discuss maintenance issues and possible improvements for the trail. Unsurprisingly, more trail use by the public means that more maintenance is required. This leads me to my annual plea for users to join our organization and donate their time and money to keep the trail the wonderful asset that it is. FVTC has no paid staff, so dues and donations go solely to trail maintenance and improvements. Every penny counts and increased membership gives us a louder voice.

Our hope this year is the addition of more bike repair stations and more benches at intersections. We will continue our usual grants to towns to help them repair the trail where roots or weather have caused potholes or buckles. In addition, of course, we are working to ensure that the trail gap in Plainville is finished, and the trail is extended into Bloomfield and Hartford.

We are also hoping to add Board members and volunteers to our team. Our monthly Zoom meetings are open to the public and we invite you to attend. As we hope to be able to hold events this year, we will need volunteers so if you have time to help please let us know. It will be very much appreciated.

I hope you enjoy our Spring newsletter. It is filled with useful information, which shows just some of the many activities of the FVTC.

Trail Construction Projects Move Ahead in 2021

By Bruce Donald

Tri-State Coordinator, East Coast Greenway Alliance

Trail projects are moving ahead to complete the Farmington Canal Heritage Trail. These are the projects from south to north on the trail:

New Haven Phase IV is close to being finally awarded. Work hopefully will start later this year, with a two-year construction cycle. This 1.6 mile long project includes a tunnel from Yale University south.

Southington Phase III is out of permitting and should go to bid shortly. Ground breaking will take place perhaps later this year, but full construction will not happen until next year with completion in 2022-23.

Plainville Phase I is at 45 percent design at the Connecticut Department of Transportation (CT-DOT). My understanding is that there will be a new parking lot at Town Line Road, a stretch of boardwalk, and then the trail will follow the old Canal towpath to end in Norton Park. Construction is expected start in 2022 with completion in 2023 Phase II will be next, from the lot at Northwest Drive to the town center. The center will be designed and built last. The current estimate for completion of the FCHT in Connecticut is 2026, although that is currently only a guesstimate.

The Hartford Connector

Notable for the completion of the East Coast Greenway in Tariffville, Bloomfield, Hartford, and East Hartford, is that the Capitol Region Council of Governments has applied to CT-DOT for a large grant to do a complete feasibility and predesign for all of those remaining gaps. Keep your fingers crossed!

And in that vein, Tariffville Phase I along Rt. 189 should start construction later this year for completion in 2022. This will allow the East Coast Greenway Alliance to re-sign the route through Simsbury Center and down through Bloomfield (using the new 2 miles of Bloomfield Greenway) later in 2022. Tariffville Phase II from Rt. 315 down to Curtiss Park is awaiting final funding approval with a hopeful construction start in 2022.

Trail Census Seeks Accurate Counts

By Ryan Faulkner

The Farmington Valley Trails Council has partnered with the Connecticut Trail Census, a program by University of Connecticut Extension, studying the state's multi-use trails. The council is helping the Trail Census to make FVTC's trail counters more accurate. Volunteers have been helping by going out to the trail where the counters are located to count users for an hour at a time.

The totals from this hand count are then used to compare to what the infrared trail counter registers for that same hour. This process is done because the infrared trail counters significantly undercount users either from people zooming by on a bike or groups of people traveling side by side.

In the end, this process helps to find a more accurate number of people using the trails. Information from this count also helps to understand how many trail users are pedestrians versus cyclists. Multiple volunteers have already helped out with this effort in fall 2020. This effort and partnership will continue this year, starting in the spring.

The Trail Census has found the last few years that the hand counted numbers can range anywhere from one and a half to two times higher than the amount of users recorded by the trail counters. For busier trails and that have more bikers, the number usually ends up being closer to two than 1.5 times higher. As a result, the FVTC uses an adjustment factor of 1.7 for its counters. View user counts at the Trail Census website:

<https://cttrailcensus.uconn.edu/#>

Trail Friends



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One New Name to Create a Unified Trail: The New Haven & Northampton Canal Greenway

By Norm Berg, Secretary, Farmington Valley Trails Council
and Christy Bannish, Chairperson, Friends of the Southwick Rail Trail

The trail extending from New Haven to Northampton started as a canal, then transitioned to a railroad, and now mostly has been converted into a paved trail. The trail has different names depending on its location. In Connecticut, the trail is called the Farmington Canal Heritage Trail. In Massachusetts, the trail has these names: the New Haven and Northampton Canal Greenway, the Manhan Rail Trail, the Southampton Greenway, the Columbia Greenway Rail Trail and the Southwick Rail Trail.

In September of 2020, volunteers proposed the adoption of a unified name for the entire trail to address the variety of names currently used locally, officially, and casually to reference segments of the trail. They suggested the clarity of this new name would promote the 81 miles of trail from New Haven to Northampton as a vibrant, active transportation corridor and a regional resource for strengthening tourism, recreational opportunities, and community health for all ages and abilities.

In response to this proposal, a group of around 20 people from the seven nonprofit, volunteer-based organizations that support the trail formed to select a unified name. The resultant name to represent the entire trail is "New Haven & Northampton Canal Greenway" (NHNCG).

At this time, the newly formed NHNCG Alliance is working to establish NHNCG as the trail's official name. These volunteers are contacting the 18 town and city governments to adopt the name locally, before proceeding to the state and national level. A long-term goal for the group is federal recognition of the entire trail.

To create a more cohesive sharing of information among trail segments, a website has been established to expose more people to all trail activities and events, and expand trail use as a whole.

A trail-wide map is in the first stages of development, along with a logo for the NHNCG.

The New Haven & Northampton Canal Greenway Alliance welcomes those who would like to help with our mission. You can find out more by going to <https://nhnccg.org> or contact us by email at info@nhnccg.org

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Preston Reed

(1916-2013)

Volunteers Needed to Help the Trail

Are you a user of the Farmington Canal Heritage Trail or Farmington River Trail whether it is on bicycle, walking or running? Would you like to be more involved in the happenings of these two linear parks that we are so fortunate to have in our area?

The FVTC is looking to expand our Board of Directors and volunteer base. Board meetings are currently being held via Zoom Conferencing, meet the second Monday of each month and are always open to the public. We are currently looking for people to represent the towns of Canton and Bloomfield but welcome all who are interested.

The FVTC also has many volunteer opportunities throughout the year. Things are a bit slow right now due to Covid-19 but we are always looking for interested parties that are committed to helping ensure the trail is a safe and enjoyable place for everyone.

Volunteer opportunities include Adopt-a-Mile, Trail Ambassadors, and Kiosk Managers and for individual ride events throughout the season. If you are interested in finding out more or listening in on a meeting visit our website at fchtrail.org or email us at info@fvgreenwav.org.

Bicycle Helmets Can Save More Than Lives

By Amy Watkins, MPH

In 2019, as I ice skated slowly on an indoor rink, I lost my balance and fell backwards. I hit my head on the ice so hard that my olfactory nerves were permanently damaged. I lost my sense of smell (and thus taste) completely for months, and though I've since regained a lot of it, my sense of smell will never be the same. I was not wearing a helmet.

A few years ago, a friend (and experienced cyclist) was taking a leisurely ride on a paved trail. She has no memory of the crash and still could not tell you what sent her hurtling off the path. The resulting head injury meant she couldn't work for months and she needed to relearn some basic skills, including how to play her favorite game. She was wearing a helmet, and shudders when she thinks of what the damage might have been if she was not.

I share these stories with you because they are real examples of what can be taken away with one decision not to wear a helmet, and what can be saved if we do. We all think, "I'm safe and experienced. I've been out hundreds of times and nothing bad has happened. The chances I will die are so small." And we're right - most times, things go as planned. But what if, that one time, things don't go as we expect? What if there's something out of our control? Sure, we likely won't die (we hope), but what are we willing to lose? The smell of coffee in the morning? The ability to relearn a game? The capacity to go back to work?

The next time you step out to bicycle, skate, ski, or scooter, put on a helmet. Think of what you have to lose if you don't. Find one that's comfortable, fashionable, in your price range - whatever's most important to you - and put it on every time. Put it on your children every time. Most days, luckily, it won't save us from anything. But the day it does, we'll be thankful. What is your helmet related safety story?

For info on helmets and other bicycle safety tips: <https://bikeleague.org/content/smart-cycling-tips-0>.

Amy Watkins is the Program Specialist for Watch for Me CT and is the Director of Safe Kids Connecticut.



Thank you, Holly Brunette

The Farmington Valley Trails Council (FVTC) Board of Directors would like to give a big "Thank you" to Holly Brunette for all she has done these last five years for the council. Holly has been instrumental in planning the Annual Clean-up Day, coordinating staging areas and managers and all the volunteers that participate each year. She has coordinated volunteers to assist at the registration table and other needs for all our seasonal rides.

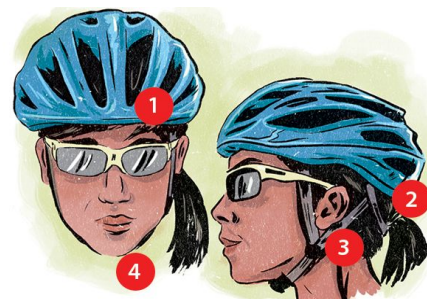
Holly's great sense of organization and get-it-done attitude has been an asset that we will surely miss. We wish Holly the best as she moves on to other adventures.

Tips for Proper Bicycle Helmet Fit

Follow this advice for proper fit from Randy Swart, director of the Bicycle Helmet Safety Institute in Arlington, Virginia.

1. Place the helmet on your head so it's level front-to-back – when you look up, the front should barely be visible – and not listing to one side.
2. Tighten the strap just enough against your chin so that it pulls your helmet down a bit when you open your mouth.
3. The Y of the strap should fall just below each ear.
4. Adjust so that the lid is snug but not too tight. (It shouldn't move when you shake your head, or leave a mark on your forehead.)

Source: <https://www.bicycling.com/bikes-gear/a20037534/wear-your-helmet-right/>



ABOUT THE FVTC

This publication is written and formatted by volunteers. The Farmington Valley Trails Council is a 501(c)(3) CT not-for-profit corporation dedicated to advocacy, education, beautification and building multi-use trails in the Farmington Valley of Connecticut. Contributions to the FVTC are generally tax-deductible.

This newsletter is available electronically, or printed and distributed by our friends at The Arc of Farmington Valley (FAVARH).

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On your handheld device:
<https://fchtrail.org>

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Check desired box(es) and enclose membership fee:



- ☐ \$20 Senior 65+
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- ☐ \$500 Sustaining Member
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- ☐ Corporate Matching Donation

Name _____

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City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Phone (home) _____ (cell) _____

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Would you like to be contacted for volunteer opportunities? Y / N

Detach and mail to FVTC, P.O. Box 576, Tariffville, CT 06081

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