

Avon Trail Annual Report – 21 November 2023

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A) Avon Trail - Annual General Meeting Minutes - 2022

Date and Time: 22 November 2022, 7 p.m. to 9 p.m.

Location: Army, Navy, and Air Force Veterans' Hall, 151 Lorne Avenue East, Stratford, Ontario

Attendance: 37 people

1. Welcome by Jane Foster, President

2. Adoption of Agenda: Motion to accept agenda – Maria Antonio/Tracy Halliwell, carried.

3. Guest Speaker: Catherine Young of the Backyard Honey Company spoke on caring for bees as a beekeeper and the lifecycle of bees. Jane Foster and Renee Lehnen gave Catherine a thank you gift.

4. Approval of minutes of AGM on 23 November 2021 – Melissa Winkler/Linda Weitzel, carried.

5. The Year in Review: All reports delivered at the AGM can be found in the Avon Trail Annual Report 2022.

- **President:** Jane Foster delivered the President's Report.
- **B) Financial:** Justin Innes delivered the Financial Report for the fiscal year ending 31 October 2022. **Motion to accept the report – Bruce Graham/Ross Campbell, carried.**
- **C) Membership:** Jane Foster delivered the Membership Report on behalf of Membership Secretary, Noreen Ollivier.
- **D) Trail Map Coordinator:** David Parratt delivered the Trail Map Coordinator's Report.
- **E) The Trail (Maintenance):** Bruce Graham delivered the Trail Maintenance Report.
- **F) Landowner Relations:** Jane Foster delivered the Landowner Relations Report on behalf of Ross Campbell.
- **G) Hikes and Events:** Jane Foster delivered the Hike and Events Report.
- **H) Marketing/Public Relations:** Jane Foster and Martha Manning delivered the Marketing/Public Relations Report.
- **I) Store:** Jane Foster delivered the Store Report on behalf of Cindy Kimber.
- **J) Newsletter:** Jane Foster delivered the Newsletter Report on behalf of Tom Kimber.

6. Budget 2022/2023: Justin Innes delivered the 2022/2023 budget. Justin stated that, generally, costs of events are balanced by fundraising and fees for events, and this is reflected in the budget for 2022/2023. **Motion to accept the budget – Maria Antonio/Jane Foster, carried.**

7. Commendation/Recognition Awards: Bruce Graham awarded the Distinguished Monitor Award for 2022 to Renee Lehnen (present) and Andy Krantz (absent).

8. Board Members Ending Tenure: Jane Foster stated that in 2022-
The following Board Members resigned from the Board: Carol Miller (Marketing, Director), Donna Weitzel (Photo Gallery, Director), and Ted Derry (Director).
The following Board Members are ending their term of service: Bernard Goward (Past President), Trevor Paetkau (Director), Ross Campbell (Landowner Relations, Director). In addition, Jane Foster is ending her term as President and will serve as Past President in the 2022/2023 Board.
Renee Lehnen gave a thank you gift to each departing Board Member.

9. Introduction of Candidates for Board of Directors 2022-2023: Jane Foster introduced the following Board Candidates with a brief biography of each: Bruce Graham, Tracy Halliwell, Alana Respondek, Christine Lee.

10. Election of Directors for Avon Trail Board 2022-2023: The following Board was proposed for 2022/2023:

President: Bruce Graham (first year of two-year term) - **candidate**

Past President: Jane Foster (first year of two-year term)

Vice President: Tracy Halliwell (first year of two-year term) - **candidate**

Treasurer: Justin Innes (second year of two-year term)

Secretary: Renee Lehnen (first year of two-year term)

Director, Marketing and Public Relations: Martha Manning (second year of two-year term)

Director: Melissa Winkler (second year of two-year term)

Director, Trail Map Coordinator: David Parratt (second year of two-year term)

Director: Alana Respondek (first year of two-year term) - **candidate**

Director: Christine Lee (first year of two-year term) - **candidate**

All candidates to the Board elected unanimously.

11. Motion to close meeting – Linda Weitzel/Noreen Ollivier, carried.

Minutes recorded by Renee Lehnen, Board Secretary

B) President's Report

November 10, 2023

From: Bruce Graham, President

I am writing to introduce the achievements of the many Directors and Members who have managed specific areas of the Avon Trail during the year ended October 31, 2023. The following pages include Reports by the aforementioned volunteers. I urge all Members to read these reports. The amount of work, dedication and creativity donated to the Avon Trail are understated.

Highlights from the Reports for year ended October 31, 2023:

- Received an increase in donations over previous years
- Avon Trail in good financial condition
- Have an increased number of Members
- Have increased the number of trained Hike Leaders
- Have held more (longer) hikes following the pandemic
- End to End hike completed
- The website has been updated
- An online Monitor Reporting form created
- Ondago trail map app updated
- Two new badges have been designed and are selling
- Held the 6th annual Wildwood Challenge
- Regular News Alerts sent to Members
- New wording on all Waivers
- Tree planting commenced on three areas along the Avon Trail
- Ontario Not-for-Profit Corporations Act revisions of the Avon Trail revisions proposed for the AGM
- Trail Audit performed by two volunteers who walked the entire trail
- A new trail, the Queen Elizabeth Loop, built south of Stratford

I would also like to thank all other volunteers who have given their time to making the Avon Trail safe and enjoyable for other Members and for the walking public who hike the trail.

Sincerely,

Bruce Graham

C) Vice President's Report

Nov. 9, 2023

Memo to the Avon Trail Board (for AGM on Nov. 21, 2023)

From Tracy Halliwell, Vice President.

REPORT

Waivers: re-worked all waivers with the generous help of Clive. Made wording consistent and replaced the word "Covid", with "any respiratory or other airborne or droplet infectious disease". We have a new Rambles waiver for 2024 to contain more hiker information.

Incident Reporting Form: added box for "Witnesses and their observations of Incident and contact information".

Badges: redesigned the Avon Trail End to End badge and the Wildwood Challenge 2023 badge. New badges received positive feedback.

Wildwood Challenge: 70 participants registered (a few dropped out due to rain). Apparently, all hikers had smiles on their faces and complements to give at rest stops and at completion. We raised over \$1500 for the club. A huge success once more, thanks to our many volunteers: Bruce, Tracy, Tom, Cindy, Clive, Phil, Linda, Gloria, Frances, Rose K., Ted, Wayne and Dana. Also, many thanks to our volunteer Bakers: Noreen, Christine, Gloria, Marjorie, Carol, Valerie, Brenda, Linda, Jane, Jamie, Rose B. and Tracy. The evening post hike party held by Bruce & Anna was well attended and received. Thank you to Bruce & Anna.

info@avontrail.ca: our email address used for general inquiries is monitored regularly and made the primary address for emailing the club.

Post office box: checked regularly (by Justin and Tracy), as many donations and membership renewals still come through Canada Post.

E) Membership Report

AVON TRAIL MEMBERSHIP REPORT as of October 31, 2023

Total number of members: 213

Total number of paid memberships: 199

73 Adult memberships

5 renewed by cheque or cash

68 renewed on line

63 Family memberships (count as 2 people)

4 renewed by cheque or cash

59 renewed on line

Total Honorary members: 14

Notes:

There has been an increase of 10 paid memberships since October 31, 2021.

The on-line membership renewal system is working well.

Submitted by:

Noreen Ollivier
Membership Secretary

November 8, 2023

*F) Trail Map Coordinator's Report***TRAIL MAP COORDINATOR REPORT - NOV. 2023**

1. Jan 2023. A review of Ondago Avon Trail maps was undertaken. Several minor errors and areas requiring update were found and corrected.
2. June 2023. A temporary closure of Dunn's Bridge on O'Loane Avenue occurred, interrupting the possibility of a loop hike on the Stratford Side Trail in the TJ Dolan Natural Area. The bridge is expected to reopen in the near future.
3. Sept 2023. Closure of the Forest Road South Sidetrail at the request of the landowner
4. Sept 2023. Opening of the new Queen Elizabeth Loop. This 2.8 km loop is located 800 m. south of Perth-Oxford Line, near Km. 31 of the Avon Trail. Currently, the Queen Elizabeth Loop is not contiguous with the main trail, but expansion of the loop is planned.
5. Sept 2023. Creation of Edition 9.4 of the Avon Trail Guide Printable Maps. This update incorporated the trail changes outlined in items 3 & 4. Previous purchasers of the Avon Trail Edition 9 should have received email notification of this update.
6. Nov 2023. Additional improvements and updates to our Ondago maps. In the future, GPS coordinates will be shown to 4 decimal points instead of the 6 decimal points currently displayed.

David Parratt
Trail Map Coordinator

G) Maintenance Report

November 10, 2023

Memo to: Avon Trail Board of Directors

From : Bruce Graham, Trail Captain

Trail make up at October 31, 2023

The Avon Trail, St Marys to Conestogo, measures 129.7 km on the main trail and 11.3 km on side trails. The side trails lengths were decreased by the loss of Forest Road South (0.5 km) but offset by the addition of the Queen Elizabeth Loop (2.8 km).

Monitors

The Avon Trail is divided into 27 sections. Each section is monitored by two AT volunteer members. At October 31, 2023, four sections are without Monitors due to a section newly created or Monitors who appear to have “dropped out.” During 2022/23 where a section was unmonitored, or the Monitor failed to report, the Trail Captain or experienced volunteers

covered the section

During the period ending October 31, 2023 Monitor reports were received for all sections. Monitoring hours totaled 332 (2021/22: 177). This increase is due to the hard work of Monitors plus better recording of hours when using the online reporting system created in early 2023.

The Avon Trail needs additional volunteers to assist with Monitoring sections, particularly in Perth East and Wilmot.

Maintenance

Maintenance has been done throughout 2022/23 and has totaled 157 hours (2021/22: 382 hours). The drop in hours is due to a technical glitch in July 2023 that caused a loss of data; actual total hours were likely similar to 2021/22. Work included repairing stiles, bridges and boardwalks; chainsaw work; tool repair; blazing; grass cutting; and removing trip hazards. Work was performed by the Maintenance crew almost weekly. Persons interested in helping with Maintenance are welcome to join; even twice a year is helpful. Contact info@avontrail.ca.

Timely grass cutting continues to be a challenge during the summer. The Board of Directors will try to improve the grass cutting situation in 2024.

Construction

Building trail fixtures, such as bridges or boardwalks, and creating new trails is classified as Construction. During 2022/23 various Construction volunteers spent 109 hours (2021/22: 203). The drop in hours is due to a technical glitch in July 2023 that caused a

loss of data; actual total hours were likely similar to 2021/22. Major achievements were one “get off the field” trail re-routes plus the creation of the new Queen Elizabeth Loop.

Tools

The club owns trail maintenance tools, hammers and clippers, and grass cutting tools, such as lawnmowers. At year end the club owns 3 lawnmowers, 4 brushcutters (weed whackers) and 2 bearcats. All are operational and professionally serviced. All are stored in the club’s shed in Stratford with the exception of one chop saw located in a nearby woodwork shop.

Summary

The Avon Trail is in very good shape at time of writing: safe and easy to follow.

The energetic and cheerful volunteers who stepped up to assist during 2022/2023 are too many to list here but my thanks go to each and every one of them.

H) Landowner Relations Report

November 10, 2023

Memo to: Avon Trail Board of Directors

From : Bruce Graham, Landowners Relations (acting)

During the year ended October 31, 2023 I have contacted several Landowners in the course of Maintenance, tree planting and of adding the new Queen Elizabeth Loop. Those that I have met have been very friendly and helpful. Given my other roles within the club I am unable to visit as many Landowners I would wish.

The Avon Trail crosses dozens of privately owned property and these landowners' generosity is simply amazing. I hope that all hikers show their gratitude by not littering, picking up litter if spotted, not trampling clops and not foraging.

1) Hike Scheduler's Report

Hike Scheduler Report 2023
Avon Trail AGM - Nov 21, 2023

Hike Leaders

The Avon Trail Association currently has, in its ranks, 9 active Registered Hike Leaders: Bruce Graham, Jane Foster, Renee Lehnen, Meg Westley, Tracy Halliwell and Maria Antonio. Included in this number are Alana Respondek, Geoff Williams and Christine Lee who became registered hike leaders this year. We are fortunate to have so many capable and enthusiastic folks leading hikes on the Avon Trail and beyond.

Tuesday Rambles

Tuesday Rambles continues to be a vital and valuable way that we connect and contribute to the wider community. Tuesday Rambles happen every Tuesday morning, almost without exception. Only a few of these hikes have been canceled this year due to weather conditions. These hikes are leisurely and social in nature, opening up an opportunity for first time Avon Trail hikers to discover the Trail. Maybe more importantly, these hikes provide social connection and a place to belong for many folks in our community.

A small number of Hike Leaders volunteer in leading these hikes which explore a different stretch of the Avon Trail each week. But one Hike Leader must be named for her herculean effort in ensuring these Tuesday Rambles happen with consistency each week. Jane Foster has almost single handedly taken on the responsibility of not only leading these hikes but planning the routes and working out the logistics of carpooling. Jane has dedicated a huge amount of time and energy to the Tuesday Rambles and for this she deserves acknowledgment and appreciation.

However, it is not reasonable to expect that it is sustainable for any one person to carry the full responsibility of these weekly hikes. I believe that in order to maintain Tuesday Rambles, we must have a group of committed volunteers to share the task; as the saying goes, many hands make light work! If you are interested, please contact me to learn how you can get involved in this wonderful initiative.

melissaglauser@gmail.com

End to End 2023

A major highlight this year was our End to End Event. Before going into more detail about this event it must be noted that it would not have been possible without the tireless work that Tracy Halliwell did to organize carpooling for every End to End hike. This is no small feat! Tracy spent hours, I'm sure, making phone calls to figure out who could drive, which cars would be left at the far end of each hike, how all hikers would then be transported back to the beginning of the hike. Not to mention, when she had it all worked out, I would guess more than once, she would receive a phone call from one of the drivers that they could no longer attend, and then... back to the drawing board!

Much gratitude and appreciation to Tracy for taking on this difficult challenge.

Tom Kimber penned an excellent article about the End to End Event from which I will now quote and excerpt,

“What began April 29 in St. Marys ended November 4 in Conestogo for participants of the Avon Trail End-to-End leader-led hikes. From western to eastern terminus, 11 hikes were held in 2023 to walk the entire trail – 130 km. Many hikers participated over the year on some of these hikes. Ten hikers completed all 11 sections.”

“At the trail (eastern) terminus the ten hikers posed by the rock to commemorate their End to End accomplishment. Congratulations to Marjorie, Rose, Christine, Tracy, Robb, Bernice, Mala, Clive, Galina and Murray.”

These dedicated hikers were rewarded with our newly re-designed End to End Badge. Well done hikers!

I encourage everyone to check out Tom’s full article on the Avon Trail website. You will also find lots of excellent photos to enjoy. All of Tom’s articles are informative and pleasant reading. You can find his writing under News and Highlights on the Avon Trail Website. You can also subscribe to the Avon Trail newsletter so that it comes right to your inbox!

6th Annual Wildwood Challenge

This completely sold out event took place on Oct 21, 2023 at Wildwood Conservation Area. As in the past, it was a huge success based on the efforts of many generous volunteers.

Other Notable Hikes

Our excellent Hike Leaders organized several other hikes this year as noted here:

May 18, 2023 Maitland Trail

Jun 15, 2023 Thames Valley Trail

Sep 16, 2023 Hullet Provincial Wildlife Area

Oct 7, 2023 Morrison Dam Hike

In conclusion I would like to thank all of our Hike Leaders for their dedication and enthusiasm. The hikes and events organized and executed by this wonderful group of leaders is what brings people together and brings the trail to life. Thank you.

J) Marketing/Public Relations Report

2023 Marketing/Promotion/Social Media Report

- New Facebook business page has been created. There is also one that was automatically created by Facebook, but we do not have access to run this page (it is called “The Avon Trail” and currently has 43 likes). To follow the page we can control, please search for “Avon Trail” on Facebook and give it a like (currently has 11 followers). This page can have administrators added and can be used to share information with followers and the public.
- The new page does not replace the much successful Facebook group called “AvonTrail.ca”, which is a community site where anyone can share and discuss anything related with the trail, hiking, etc. Note that this page has been having a lot of spam postings, so there is a step in which posts have to be approved before being shared. People that post legitimately will be “pre-approved” after their first post, and will not have to go through this step going forward- don’t let it deter you from sharing!
- Destination Stratford has received many of our “side trail” maps for inclusion in their selection of local promotional materials as they have been going through them quickly. St. Mary’s Friends of the Library have also received a fresh batch of these brochures
- As we dwindle our supply of these side trail fliers, the board will be discussing and deciding on future “hard copy” resources that can be shared in the community
- New Avon Trail End to End badges were created, thanks to Tracy

K) Store Report

Avon Trail Store Report
 Total Sales 2023
 November 1, 2022 – October 31, 2023

Item	Total Sales	Total Revenue	Stock Remaining
Trail Guide	54	450.00	
Avon Trail Badges	2	15.00	10
End-to-End Badge	31	336.00	58
6 th Annual Wildwood Challenge	69	2381.00	
Shipping		22.00	
Total	150	\$ 3,204.00	

Notes:

50% increase in Trail Guides sold year to year

94 % increase in End to End badges sold year to year

An additional Wildwood Challenge entry was paid for at the event but never went through the store.

Total sales were down 34% but one less event was held (The Queen's Platinum Jubilee Hike in 2022)

Waiver forms are now required before payment – which although not totally seamless proved useful.

Hiking logs are submitted to the shopkeeper directly facilitating order processing.

Respectfully submitted,
 Cindy Kimber, Shopkeeper

L) Newsletter Report

This past year (November 2022 through November 2023) Avon Trail news stories were issued through News Alerts rather than the Avon Trail Tales Newsletter. All news alert stories are published through the website. Many stories are time sensitive so issuing them through News Alerts is more effective than through a quarterly newsletter.

The stories contained in the news alerts keep members informed of conditions on the trails. Readers are reminded of leader led hikes including Tuesday Rambles for members and non-members to join.

This is also how members are alerted to Columbia Store sales and what a member needs to gain access. Changes to the trail are presented in stories such as new side trails and re-routes on existing sections. More than 50 stories were published this year.

Much like the newsletter, the stories in News Alerts are accessed through the AvonTrail.ca website. AvonTrail.ca remains the best way to stay informed about the trail.

Regards,

Tom Kimber

2023

M) Website Report

This report is new for 2023. We have encouraged members to use the website to stay informed – the Event Calendar provides information on hikes scheduled. The News and Photo Gallery for hiking news and photos. The website Store provides access for online purchase of Trail Guide and badges.

Changes made to the website now make it easier to complete sales and get merchandise to the customer (for example end-to-end badges and digital trail guides).

Each member can manage their profile data directly from the website (under Your Profile). The membership creation and renewal process has been streamlined to ensure that everyone agrees to the Terms of Use for participation.

Volunteer Trail Section Monitors can now manage and submit their trail reports directly from the website.

The website remains stable, capable of handling traffic from members and nonmembers. The framework continues to provide a familiar interface with access through the ribbon on HOME page to HIKES & EVENTS, PHOTO GALLERY, NEWS, and the SHOP.

Members can access and manage their personal information data and access membership resources through the WELCOME RIBBON. Many thanks to Donna Weitzel for managing The EVENT CALENDAR and PHOTO GALLERY.

Members can contribute photos and stories to the website. Send to newsletter@avontrail.ca
Many thanks to Sharon Zehr of SZoomDesign for her help in keeping our processes running smoothly.

Regards,

Tom Kimber,

website co-ordinator 2023

O) Constitution Committee's Report

31 October 2023

Purpose and Composition of the Committee:

Over Summer and Fall 2023, Martha Manning, Alana Respondek, and Renee Lehnen met:

- to review the Ontario Not-for-Profit Corporations Act (ONCA)
- to identify discrepancies and gaps between Avon Trail's (AT) Constitution and business practices and ONCA
- to suggest amendments to AT's Constitution and updates to AT's Codes of Conduct and governance practices to bring them into alignment with ONCA.

Background:

Provincially incorporated non-profit organizations including AT have until October 2024 to bring their bylaws into compliance with ONCA. From 18 October 2024, ONCA rules will supersede AT's bylaws in instances of misalignment. Bruce Graham provided the committee with a workbook outlining the ONCA legislation, his notes, and AT's constitution.

Note: the terms "bylaws" and "constitution" are essentially synonymous under ONCA.

Progress to Date:

- A form/letter to be signed annually by each Board Member agreeing to the Member's role on the Board as well as agreeing to adherence with the Board Code of Conduct has been drawn up. The Members of the 2023-2024 Board will be asked to sign the form/letter.
- The AT Members' Code of Conduct has been updated and added to the Membership Application Form.
- Proposed Constitutional amendments for compliance with ONCA were sent to the membership in October and will be discussed and voted on at the AGM.

Plan:

- The AT Constitution will be updated after the AGM.
- The Constitution Committee will reconvene in 2024 to review the Constitution and AT's practices against ONCA to identify any other areas of non-compliance to be rectified.
- AT will explore ways to store documents that are compliant with ONCA including cloud storage.
- Members will be able to request the membership list for AT business.

Report compiled by Renee Lehnen

P) Board Members of 2022/2023

Executive:

President: Bruce Graham

Past President: Jane Foster

Vice President: Tracy Halliwell

Recording Secretary: Renee Lehen

Treasurer: Justin Innes

Directors:

Martha Manning, Marketing/Public Relations

Dave Parratt, Trail Map Coordinator

Melissa Winkler, Hike Scheduler

Christine Lee, Trail Maintenance Coordinator

Alana Respondek

Annual Report compiled by Renee Lehen