



THE AVON TRAIL

ANNUAL REPORT



18 November 2025

Avon Trail – Annual Report – 18 November 2025

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A) Avon Trail - Annual General Meeting Minutes – 2024

Date and Time: 7:00 pm, Tuesday, 19 November 2024

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

Attendance: 40 members. Attendance is recorded in a separate document.

1. Opening Remarks:

Bruce Graham welcomed everyone to the AGM.

2. Agenda:

Renee Lehnert outlined the Agenda.

Motion to approve the Agenda – Maria Antonio/Terry Aitken, carried.

3. Guest Speaker:

Christine Lee introduced the guest speaker, **Chris Lee, volunteer with the G2G Trail.**

Chris Lee delivered a PowerPoint presentation on the history of the G2G Trail, the benefits of trails with a focus on the G2G, how trails support government and community endeavors, and recent, current, and future projects on the G2G.

Bruce Graham thanked Chris Lee for speaking and presented him with a monetary gift and card.

4. Remembrance, Recognition of Volunteers:

Bruce Graham honoured the memories of Jane Pullin, Joan Daynard, and Mavis Kerr, members who died in the past year.

Bruce Graham thanked the many Avon Trail volunteers with special gratitude extended to:

Tom and Cindy Kimber, trail monitors of the year

Terry Aitken, recipient of an honorary lifetime membership, chocolates, and certificate.

5. Refreshment Break:

Members enjoyed snacks and beverages, organized by Jane Foster.

6. Business:

A) Minutes of 2023 AGM:

Motion to approve the minutes of the 2023 AGM: Donna Weitzel/Christine Lee, carried.

B) Presentation of Annual Reports, Financial Statements, and Budget:

All reports except the budget are included in the Annual Report and were presented at the AGM.

- **President's Report:** Presented by Bruce Graham. Bruce added that Christine Lee is now representing AT on the City of Stratford Active Transportation Advisory Committee (ATAC), that signage re. the Stratford Side Trail has been installed where the trail crosses Romeo Street, and that AT has been granted permission to blaze the Stratford Side Trail. Bruce stated that 2025 will be AT's 50th anniversary year. Christine Lee announced that a **gala will be held on 13 September 2025 at the Stratford Country Club.**

- **Vice President's Report:** Presented by Alana Respondek on behalf of Tracy Halliwell
- **Financial/Treasurer's Reports:** Presented by Justin Innes. See Appendix A.
Motion to accept the financial report – Bruce Graham/Jane Foster, carried.
- **Membership Report:** Presented by Alana Respondek on behalf of Noreen Ollivier. Alana announced that Noreen is retiring as membership secretary and Alana will be assuming the role effective 1 December 2024.
- **Trail Map Coordinator's Report:** Presented by Bruce Graham on behalf of David Parratt
- **Trail Captain's Report:** Presented by Bruce Graham
- **Landowner Relations Report:** Presented by Bruce Graham. Bruce announced that Linda Weitzel is replacing him as Landowner Relations Officer.
- **Hike Schedule Coordinator's Report:** Presented by Alana Respondek on behalf of Tracy Halliwell
- **Marketing/Public Relations Report:** Presented by Bruce Graham on behalf of Martha Manning
- **Store Report:** Presented by Bruce Graham on behalf of Cindy Kimber
- **Newsletter Report:** Presented by Bruce Graham on behalf of Tom Kimber
- **Website Report:** Presented by Bruce Graham on behalf of Tom Kimber
- **Budget:** Presented by Justin Innes. See Appendix B.
Motion to approve the 2024-25 budget – Maria Antonio/Christine Lee, carried.

C) Constitutional Amendments:

Alana Respondek and Renee Lehnert outlined AT's process for bringing AT's Constitution and practices in line with the Ontario *Not-for-Profit Corporations Act* (ONCA) which came into effect in October 2024.

The following amendments were made to AT's Constitution:

- **Re. Bylaw 5, C: Motion to change final word in the sentence from "given" to "presented" – Christine Lee/Donna Weitzel, carried.**
- **Re. Bylaw 5: Motion to add "(F) Members may add items pertaining to Avon Trail business to a Members' meeting agenda with greater than 60 days notice at the discretion of the Board." – Linda Weitzel/Maria Antonio, carried.**

- **Re. Bylaw 7, Section D, i: Motion to strike phrase “preside at all meetings of the Directors and club in general;” – Bruce Graham/Andy Krantz, carried.**
- **Re. Bylaw 7, Section D, iii: Motion to add phrase at end of the sentence “in a manner compliant with the *Ontario Not-for-Profit Corporations Act*.” – Andy Krantz/Bruce Graham, carried.**
- **Re. Bylaw 7, Section D, iv: Motion to add in the second line after the word “club” “in a manner compliant with the *Ontario Not-for-Profit Corporations Act*.” – Maria Antonio/Christine Lee, carried.**
- **Re. Bylaw 8: Motion to add “11. Board Chair a) Will be a Board member who is chosen by the Board each fiscal year to set board meeting agenda and preside over board meetings.” – Bruce Graham/Roland Plum, carried.**
- **Re. Bylaw 9, A, iii: Motion to change “should” to “will” in the last line – Donna Weitzel/Maria Antonio, carried.**
- **Re: Bylaw 9, B, ii, v, and vi: Motion to strike these clauses from the constitution – Terry Aitken/Bruce Graham, carried.**
- **Re. Bylaw 9, B: Motion to add clause “The *Occupiers’ Liability Act, RSO 1990* is applicable to all landowners, members, and users of the Avon Trail.” – Terry Aitken/Christine Lee, carried.**

Change in Practice during 2023-24:

Alana Respondek and Renee Lehnen stated that AT is now keeping minutes for all committee meetings per *ONCA*.

D) Board:

From the floor, Bruce Graham nominated Roland Plum to be a Director on the AT Board, and Roland accepted the nomination.

Proposed Board for 2024-25:

President: Bruce Graham (1-year term)

Vice President, Hike Schedule Coordinator: Tracy Halliwell (1-year term)

Treasurer: Justin Innes (2nd year of 2-year term)

Secretary: Renee Lehnen (1st year of 2-year term)

Past President: Jane Foster

Director, Marketing and Public Relations: Martha Manning (2nd year of 2-year term)

Director, Trail Map Coordinator: David Parratt (2nd year of 2-year term)

Director, ATAC rep: Christine Lee (2nd year of 2-year term)

Director, Membership Secretary: Alana Respondek (1st year of 2-year term)

Director, Webmaster and Newsletter Editor: Tom Kimber (1st year of 2-year term)

Director, Maintenance: Roland Plum (1st year of 2-year term)

Motion to accept the proposed Board – Ross Campbell/Maria Antonio, carried.

E) 2025 AGM:

Bruce Graham announced that **the 2025 AGM will be held on Tuesday, 18 November 2025.**

F) Motion to close the meeting: Donna Weitzel/Maria Antonio, carried.

Minutes recorded by Renee Lehn, Secretary to the Board.

Appendix A

AVON TRAIL, 2023-2024

Budget Comparison for the Year ended Oct 31,2024

	2022-23 Actual	2023-24 Budget	2023-24 Actual	Difference
REVENUES				
Memberships	4,236.00	5,000.00	4,950.00	50.00
Trail Guides	469.00	500.00	323.00	177.00
AT badges	394.00	300.00	342.00	- 42.00
Fundraisers	1,996.00	2,000.00	3,258.00	- 1,258.00
Interest	817.83	800.00	1,533.16	- 733.16
Grants and equip sales	554.25		750.00	- 750.00
HST rebates			889.45	- 889.45
General Donations	28,116.26	2,500.00	2,807.00	- 307.00
Total Revenues	36,583.34	11,100.00	14,852.61	- 3,752.61
EXPENSES				
	-			-
Badges	473.92	250.00	896.78	- 646.78
Trail Maintenance & Signage	888.25	2,200.00	3,143.88	- 943.88
Lawnmower		1,000.00	1,139.23	- 139.23
Bridge/Board	252.61	1,000.00	1,038.47	- 38.47
Room rentals-members meetings	782.04	1,900.00	1,565.38	334.62
Guest honoraria & expenses	-	300.00	193.96	106.04
Training	35.00	450.00		450.00
Digital filing system		750.00	1,002.00	- 252.00
Misc	618.24	500.00	-	500.00
Affiliation fees	300.00	325.00	300.00	25.00
Fundraising	829.44	1,000.00	971.19	28.81
Insurance	1,262.79	1,300.00	1,290.00	10.00
Office supplies, stamps, faxes	282.56	250.00	77.81	172.19
Post Office Box Rental	205.66	225.00	211.31	13.69
Website & Development	3,840.95	3,750.00	1,262.59	2,487.41
Bank Fees	352.15	500.00	404.25	95.75
				-
Total Expenses	10,123.61	15,700.00	13,496.85	2,203.15
SURPLUS(DEFICIT)	\$ 26,459.73	- 4,600.00	1,355.76	- 5,955.76


Statement of Receipts and Expenditures for as at Oct 31, 2024

TD Bank Balance forward Nov 1, 2023	19002.86
Investment-TD Bank 14 Month GIC as at Aug 29, 2023	10128.55
100 day revolving GIC due December 27, 2023	<u>20456.22</u>
	549,587.68

RECEIPTS

DONATIONS	2807.00
MEMBERSHIPS	4930.00
TRAIL GUIDES	323.00
AVON TRAIL BADGES	342.00
Grants	250.00
Equipment sale	500.00
HST rebates	889.45
Annual Wildwood Challenge 2024	3258.00
TD INVEST. EARNINGS (INTEREST RE-INVESTED)	<u>1533.16</u>

TOTAL INCOME **\$ 14,852.61**

EXPENDITURES

P.O. BOX RENTAL	211.31
INSURANCE	1290.00
STATIONERY, STAMPS	77.81
AFFILIATION FEES	300.00
TRAIL MAINTENANCE & SIGNAGE	3143.88
Wildwood Challenge	971.19
Misc (lawn mower)	1139.23
Bridge/board	1038.47
Promotion and events	484.22
MEETING EXPENSES	1295.12
Badges	896.78
WEBSITE & COMPUTER PROGRAM	2264.59
BANK FEES, PAYPAL	<u>404.25</u>

TOTAL EXPENSES **\$ 13,496.85**
\$20,943.44

BALANCE October 31, 2024 \$ 18,825.46
 INVEST. GIC-TD BANK as at October 29, 2024 \$ 10,747.83
 100 day revolving GIC due Jan 24, 2025 \$ 21,370.15
\$ 50,943.44

Prepared by: Justin Innes

Appendix B

AVON TRAIL, 2023-2024 Budget for the Year ended Oct 31,2025

	2023-24 Actual	2023-24 Budget
REVENUES		
Memberships	4,950.00	5,000.00
Trail Guides	323.00	500.00
AT badges	342.00	300.00
Fundraisers	3,258.00	3,000.00
Interest	1,533.16	1,500.00
Grants and equip sales	750.00	250.00
HST rebates	889.45	500.00
General Donations	2,807.00	2500.00
Total Revenues	14,852.61	13,550.00
EXPENSES		
Badges	896.78	500.00
Trail Maintenance & Signage	3,143.88	3,500.00
Lawnmower	1,139.23	-
Bridge/Board	1,038.47	1,250.00
Room rentals-members meetings	1,565.38	4,000.00
Guest honoraria & expenses	193.96	450.00
Training		500.00
Digital filing system	-	-
Misc	-	1,000.00
Affiliation fees	300.00	300.00
Fundraising	971.19	1,500.00
Insurance	1,290.00	1,350.00
Office supplies, stamps, /axes	77.81	150.00
Post Office Box Rental	211.31	250.00
Website& Development	1,262.59	1,500.00
Bank Fees	404.25	500.00
Total Expenses	10,123.61	16,750.00
SURPLUS(DEFICIT)	26,459.73 -	3,200.00

B) President's Report

October 31, 2025

Memo to: Avon Trail Board of Directors

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, 2025. 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, 2025:

- Received generous donations from new sources
- Avon Trail in good financial condition
- Membership has slightly decreased
- New Hike Leaders are very active leading new interesting hikes
- The website continues to be updated
- Maps, both printed and online (Ondago) are generally up to date
- New badges have been created and have sold well
- Held the 8th annual Wildwood Challenge Fundraiser.
- Regular News Alerts sent to Members
- The Strategic Plan has been updated (2025 – 2030)
- New re-routes have been completed
- The Board continues to function well. Two new energetic Directors are recruited for the 2025/2026 Board
- 2025 is the Avon Trail's 50th year and a well attended Gala was held.
- Subsequent to year end the Stratford Side Trail is being blazed through the city of Stratford.
- Held a thank you Picnic for trail Monitors.
- Held a thank you lunch for the Maintenance Team.
- Recruited Christine Lee to take over as President November 1, 2025

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

I would like to thank the Board of Directors for their diligent and intelligent support during my three years as President.

C) Vice President's Report

Oct. 28, 2024

Memo to The Avon Trail Board (for AGM on Nov. 18, 2025)

From: Tracy Halliwell, Vice President

REPORT

Wildwood Challenge 2025

- New WWC8 badge design by Matthew Gubernat
- Record number of Registrants: 100
- 82 hiked
- 18 cancellations due to injury, illness, travelling, family emergency.
- One injury requiring medical attention
- Raised \$2500. This event also helped support Wildwood Conservation Area (UTRCA).
- A HUGE success once again, thanks to our many on-site volunteers: Bruce G., Phil A., Donna W., Alana R., Clive C., Cindy K., Tom K., Gloria H., Julia V., Linda W., Rose B., Christine L., and Tracy H. (organizer), and our off-site volunteers: Dana K., Brenda T., Jamie G., Jane F., Renee L.

New End to End badge featuring the iconic Wise Old Oak, will be in our shop for sale in January 2026.

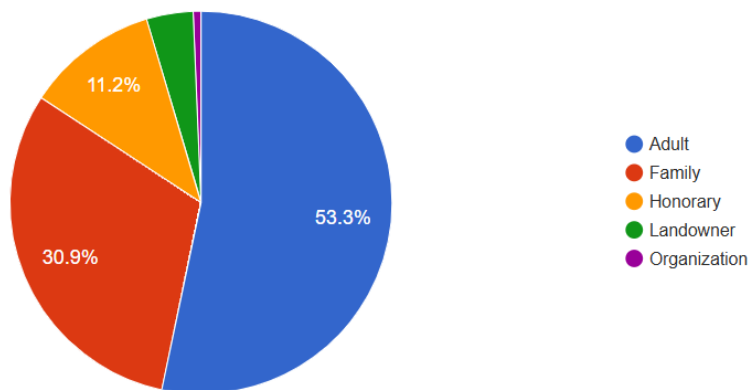
info@avontrail.ca: our email address used for general inquiries is monitored regularly.

Post Office Box: checked regularly (by Justin, Bruce, and Tracy. A few donations and membership renewals still come in through Canada Post.

Received donations in memory of Dick & Jane Pullen.

Special Note: It has been a pleasure to work with the Executive and Board of Directors of The Avon Trail. Even though I am relinquishing my position as Vice President, on the Board, I will continue to monitor info@avontrail.ca, and be the Hike Schedule Coordinator. I will also continue to organize Wildwood Challenge for the next two years, as long as I am able to find volunteers to help.

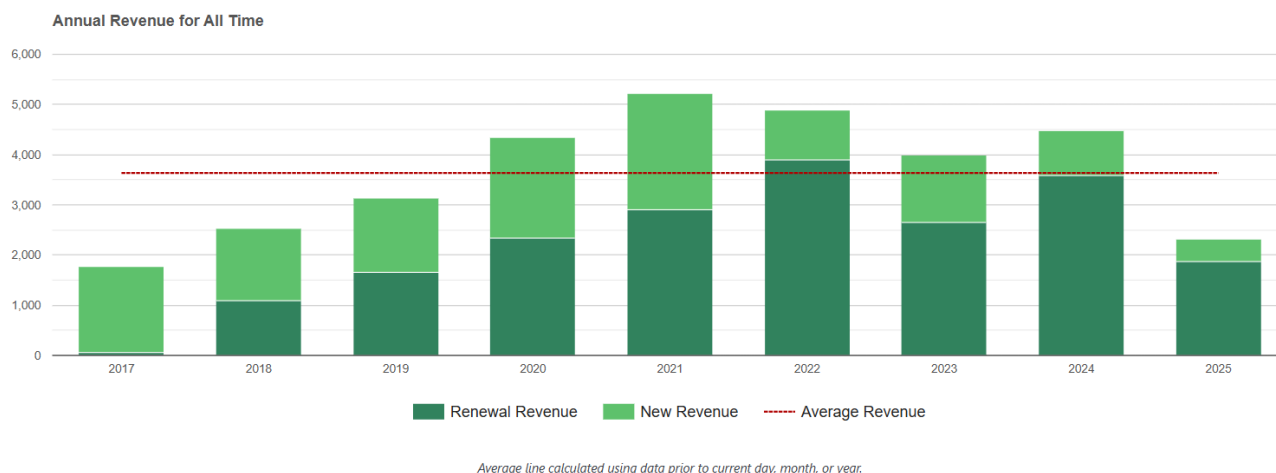
D) Membership Report November 3, 2025



Level Name	Number of Active Members
Adult	81
Family	47
Honorary	17
Landowner	6
Organization	1

TOTAL NUMBER OF PAYING MEMBERS		
Level	Number of Active Members	Number of Paying Members
Adult	81	81
Family	47	$47 \times 2 = 94$
Honorary	Do not pay	0
Landowner	6	6
Organization	1	1
		182

**Numbers as of Nov 3, 2025



E) Trail Map Coordinator's Report

Two major reroutes of the trail occurred in 2025.

1. Starting at Perth Line 29 (km 42.4), the trail now heads north and then east to Road 110 (km 45.8). This reroute removes an extended section of road walking of Perth Line 33, which is a busy road.
2. At km 89.3 on Berlett's Road, a section of trail around the perimeter of a farmer's field has been removed. This segment often had very long grass to deal with and added very little to the overall trail experience. Now the trail continues along Berlett's Road with a short side trail to the Drumlin Lookout.

The main Avon Trail now measures 128.6 km in length. Up to date maps are available on the Ondago app and Edition 9.8 of the Avon Trail printable maps.

David Parratt

F) Trail Captain's Report

October 31, 2025

From : Bruce Graham, Trail Captain

Trail make up at October 31, 2024

The Avon Trail, St Marys to Conestogo, measures 128.6 km on the main trail and 12.0 km of Avon Trail managed side trails.

Monitors

Commencing in 2024/2025 Christine Lee is the Monitor Liason.

The Avon Trail is divided into 33 sections. Each section is monitored by two AT volunteer members. At October 31, 2025, one sections was without Monitors.

Maintenance

Commencing 2024/25 Roland Plum is the Maintenance Co-ordinator.

Maintenance has been done throughout 2024/25. Work included repairing stiles, bridges and boardwalks; chainsaw work; tool repair; blazing; grass cutting; and section rehabilitation. Work was performed by the Maintenance crew almost weekly. Persons interested in helping with Maintenance are welcome to join; even twice a year is still helpful. Contact info@avontrail.ca.

Timely grass cutting continues to be a challenge during the summer. A third self propelled lawn mower was added to the shed, helping the crew in 2024/2025. Professional season end maintenance in 2024 ensured little breakage.

During 2025 our two certified chainsaw operators were joined by a third. The certification course is essential to keep our volunteers safe.

Construction

During 2025/2026 two re-routes were completed. One plank bridge was replaced and some boardwalks added.

Tools

The Avon Trail owns trail maintenance tools, clippers, and grass cutting tools, such as lawnmowers. At year end the club owns 4 lawnmowers, 4 brushcutters (weed whackers). 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.

Please note that many trail volunteers fulfill many roles. The energetic and cheerful volunteers who stepped up to assist during 2023/2024 are too many to list here but I thank each and every one of them.

G) Monitor Liaison Report

November 18, 2025

I would like to thank the many volunteers who monitor the Avon Trail 3 times a year and help keep it safe and in tip top shape for everyone to enjoy.

The fall of 2024 saw monitors making sure that the trail was clear of branches, stiles were safe, etc, or if the job was too big for them that the maintenance crew was notified so that any debris was removed before the snow arrived, which last winter we had plenty. Due to the amount of snow during the winter the monitors were late being able to complete their first inspection of the year but everyone managed to submit their reports. The beginning of summer found everything growing at a rapid rate so reports of tall grass and weeds were common. Fall has arrived again and the trail is in great shape.

It is my opinion that due to the number of dead ash trees, that have now been dead for a number of years, the problem of fallen trees has increased which means more work for the maintenance crew not only clearing these trees but also dealing with more boggy sections along the trail. The use of What3words by the monitors to zero in on trail problems has helped the maintenance crew greatly as they are not spending time walking the long way into a trail issue. Thank you to all the trail monitors for using this tool.

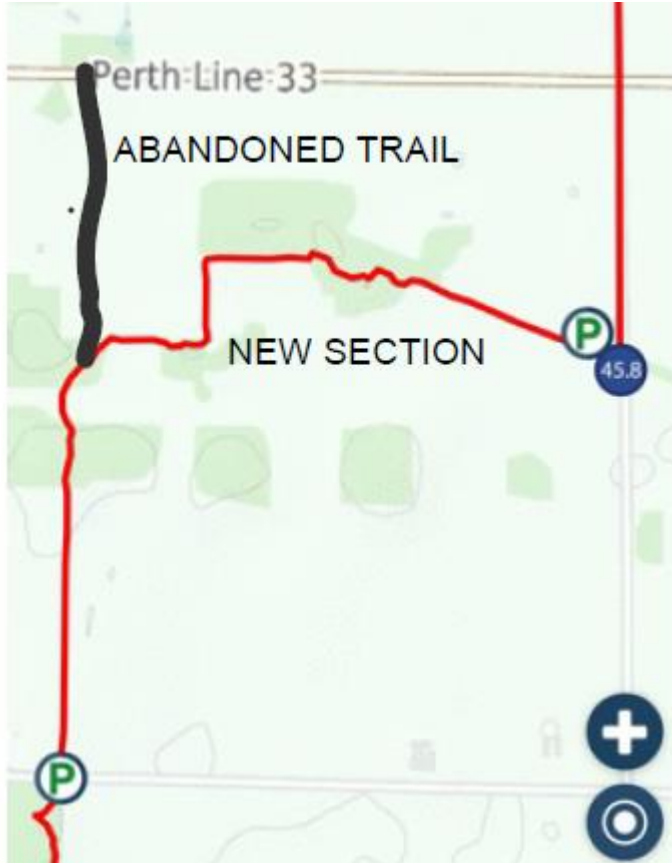
I completed an end to end of the Avon Trail in September. I was very pleased with the trail overall condition and I am proud to be part of this organization and again want to thank all the volunteers and hikers who make this trail possible and so enjoyable for so many.

Christine Lee
Monitor Liaison
Avon Trail

H) Trail Maintenance Report

1) Construction

We lost access to two sections of the trail in the last year and had to build re-routes. The first is east of km 42.4.



The second is east of km 62.3, where we had to move a 500 m section of the trail out of the forest to the edge of the field. 142.5 volunteer hours were spent on the construction of these re-routes.

2) Maintenance

Volunteers donated 324 hours of their time to maintain the trail. The main tasks were removing trees, which fell onto the trail, replacing signs and re-painting faded blazes. One highlight was the replacement of a broken bridge with a new one on the Berlett's Side Trail.



3) Grass Cutting

Some sections of the trail overgrow in spring and summer with grass and brush up to seven feet tall. Clearing these areas took 279 hours.

In total 745.5 hours were spent to maintain and improve the trail. Thank you to all the volunteers who contributed. To keep the trail in good shape especially during the summer month we need more volunteers. If you consider volunteering, please contact me at rolandplum504@gmail.com or talk to me in person.

1) Hike Schedule Coordinator's Report

Oct. 28, 2025

Memo to: The Avon Trail Board of Directors (for AGM Nov. 18, 2025)

From: Tracy Halliwell, Hike Schedule Coordinator

REPORT

We are very fortunate and grateful for our 11 Hike Leaders: Bruce G., Jane F., Renee L., Maria A., Alana R., Geoff W., Christine L., Roland P., Linda W., Rose B., and Tracy H.

Enthusiastic hike leaders have held many weekday and weekend hikes this year. These hikes have included an Avon Trail end to end, Maitland Trail end to end, Grand Bend hike and BBQ, Wildwood Challenge Event, a trial run Predictive Hike for a possible future spring fundraiser, Mystery Falls in Parkhill, and a Jane's Walk – Tree Rings Urban hike.

Upcoming Hikes for 2025 include: TVTA River Valley Golf Course to St Marys, and a Christmas Lights walk followed by a pub social.

Hikes coming up in early 2026: Pinery Provincial Park hike and observe migrating swans, MacGregor Point, and Morrison Dam/McNaughton trails.

A.T. Rambles continues to be popular, with hikes on the Avon Trail, and other destinations (Hullett Marsh, Hickson Trail, and Milverton Multi-use trail). On Nov. 11th Renee led a special walk to the veterans' area at the cemetery, and then back to the Cenotaph for the Minute of Silence. Thank you to all the hike leaders that rotate on the Rambles schedule.

We have had two Hike Leader meetings this year in Feb. and Sept.

Next meeting: Feb. 9th, 2026.

J) Store Report

Total Sales 2025

November 1, 2024 – October 31, 2025

Item	Total Sales	Total Revenue	Stock Remaining
Trail Guide	28	250	
Avon Trail Badges	7	75	42
Side Trail	19	182	30
End-to-End Badge	6	82	29
50 th Anniversary End 2 End	25	290	25
50 th Anniversary Commemorative	26	288	24
50 th Anniversary Gala	62	5270	
8 th Annual Wildwood Challenge	99	3465	
Shipping (6) and Testing (2)		8	
Total	272	\$9910	

Notes:

30% decrease in Trail Guides sold year to year.

40% increase in combined (regular and 50th Anniversary) End to End badges sold year to year.

6% increase in Wildwood Challenge registrations.

Total sales were up 149% due to the 50th Anniversary Gala. Discounting the Gala total sales were \$4640, a 17% increase.

Respectfully submitted,
Cindy Kimber, Shopkeeper

K) News Editor Report

The Avon Trail community receives email News Alerts throughout the year. For 2025, 18 stories from these alerts were published to the Avon Trail website at Avontrail.ca, along with additional posts not distributed via email.

The website features a dynamic Event Calendar that keeps the community informed about upcoming activities. For example, the Tuesday Rambles event listing is updated regularly; readers can check the calendar the day before each ramble to learn which trail section will be hiked.

This 50th anniversary year generated numerous stories about the trail itself, the GALA Dinner, planned hikes, and other promotional activities. These communications provided readers with detailed information about the Avon Trail's impact on the hiking community.

Report submitted by Tom Kimber
October 25, 2025

L) Website Report

The website keeps members informed of breaking club news and events that might be of interest. In 2025, my focus was to highlight reasons to celebrate Avon Trail's 50th Anniversary throughout the year. This was achieved through posts about the trail's history and its impact on the communities through which it runs, from St. Marys to Conestogo. The hike leaders arranged hikes covering the entire 130 km of trails, including side trail hikes and hikes on the Maitland Trail throughout the Huron and Perth regions.

The Events Calendar provides details about hiking events throughout the calendar year and is updated regularly with information for members.

The Gala dinner was promoted through website postings and Stratford media interviews.

The Shop continues to provide members with a means to purchase badges and printable maps. It is also used to facilitate ticket sales for special events such as the Wildwood Challenge and the 50th Anniversary Gala.

The green buttons that appear along the right side of the screen allow for easy access to features that help promote the trail: Trail Alerts, Printable Maps, and Interactive Maps. Trail Alerts are maintained to ensure the Avon Trail community is aware of changes on all trail sections that may affect hiking.

The media library is managed to ensure the size of each added file is minimized for storage and speed of access.

The Home page is managed to provide the Avon Trail community with situational awareness of issues that affect their safety, including information about when hunting occurs on trails throughout the Avon Trail's reach. Hiker safety is our top priority.

Report submitted by Tom Kimber
October 25, 2025

M) Active Transportation Advisory Committee Report

2024 - 2025 Annual Report
November 18, 2025

Over the past year I have attended meetings regarding active transportation in Stratford. The priority of the meetings was the routing and signing of a bike trail through Stratford along with discussion around completion of sidewalks and additional crosswalks.

An Avon Trail directional sign was installed in Confederation Park on the Stratford Side Trail west of Romeo Street and south of the waterfall in the spring. The blazing will be completed before winter.

Christine Lee
Board of Directors
Avon Trail

N) Strategic Plan 2025-2030

(To be reviewed by the board yearly in January)

Vision: Connect with nature; Enjoy a country walk

Mission: A safe system of footpaths joining St. Marys and Conestogo

Values:

1. Safe and enjoyable hiking experiences for all
2. Strong relationships and partnerships with landowners
3. Meeting the priorities of members and addressing their concerns
4. Encouraging new members to actively engage with the association
5. Good governance and strong fiscal management
6. Effective communication with members and all stakeholders
7. Building strong partnerships with other community organizations, trail associations, and Hike Ontario
8. Providing volunteers with support and feedback.

Priority Areas:

A) Serving our members

Actions:

1. Welcome package/greeting letter for new members
2. Wide variety of hikes (Rambles, evenings, longer weekend hikes, overnight hikes, child friendly hikes, and destination hikes)
3. Appreciation for hike leaders, monitors, and maintenance volunteers
4. Social activities
5. Maps
6. Newsletters
7. Strengthening the east end.

B) Building a safe and interesting trail

Actions:

1. Offering training and support for monitors and maintenance volunteers
2. Building strong landowner relationships
3. Moving more of the trail off-road and off-field
4. Developing the east end
5. Partnering with municipalities
6. Identifying new areas of specific interest.

C) Strengthening our organization

Actions:

1. Increasing the volunteer base by attracting new volunteers including youth
2. Connecting with neighbouring trail associations to share ideas.

D) *Marketing*

Actions:

1. Publicity – radio, print, media relations
2. Social media presence
3. Fundraising
4. Grants
5. Board member workshops
6. Board member orientation
7. East end board members
8. Connecting with organizations serving youth, newcomers to Canada, and others.

O) Updated Insurance and Risk Management Plan 2025

To be reviewed by the Board yearly in January

The Risk Management Plan is comprised of the following policy-related components:

1. Governance of the trail through its and mission and vision statements
2. A “Five-Year Strategic Plan”
3. Working documents and policies including:
 - Guide for Avon Trail Workers
 - Incident Report Form
 - Hike Waiver Form
 - Rambles Waiver Form
 - Trail Monitor Maintenance Report Form (online)
 - Maintenance Crew Report Form (not in current use)
 - Maintenance Crew Waiver Form
 - Avon Trail Audit Manual (not in current use)
 - Code of Conduct
 - Directors’ Letter
 - Descriptions of Roles and Responsibilities for Hike Leaders, Trail Monitors, and the Board Roles of President, Vice President, Secretary, Treasurer and the Directors-at-Large as well as other roles
 - The Bylaws/Constitution
 - The Insurance and Risk Management Policy (below).
4. Insurance policy for members and other trail users
5. Insurance policy for directors and officers of the board of directors
6. Alliance of Avon Trail policies and practices with Hike Ontario’s standards for member groups.

The Avon Trail Insurance and Risk Management Policy:

1. Hikers participating in the association's hikes, monitors, and maintenance workers must sign waivers accepting risk and indemnifying The Avon Trail and landowners.
2. Landowners are protected by the provisions of the *Occupiers' Liability Act* which states that individuals using a recreational trail in a rural area, and paying no fee for its use, assume the liability for their actions onto themselves.
3. The Avon Trail's general comprehensive liability policy indemnifies landowners and the association itself in the case of a hiker's mishap. The Avon Trail shall also maintain liability insurance for all board members.
4. Landowners have an obligation not to deliberately and knowingly create a hazardous situation with apparent disregard for the public's safety.
5. Trail workers will not deliberately create any situation which might be construed to be hazardous.
6. The Avon Trail will act as a reasonable person would to mitigate risk. The association adopts reasonable standards and ensures they are being applied.
7. Monitors will inspect the entire trail in early spring, in late spring, and in fall and report on the trail's condition. The monitors' reports will be documented and filed for later reference, and hazard mitigation work will be completed with reasonable promptness.
8. Hike leaders shall be properly trained in hike leadership and someone with current first aid training shall be present on each hike.
9. The Avon Trail will meet all standards for: trail construction and management; event leadership; and user, volunteer, and landowner relations as specified in Hike Ontario's PDF publication, 'Key Elements of Risk Management for Ontario Hiking Groups' (January 2013).

P) Board Members of 2024/2025

President: Bruce Graham

Vice President, Hike Schedule Coordinator: Tracy Halliwell

Treasurer: Justin Innes

Secretary: Renee Lehn

Past President: Jane Foster

Director, Marketing and Public Relations: Martha Manning

Director, Trail Map Coordinator: David Parratt

Director, ATAC rep, Trail Monitor Coordinator: Christine Lee

Director, Membership Secretary: Alana Respondek

Director, Webmaster and Newsletter Editor: Tom Kimber

Director, Maintenance Coordinator: Roland Plum

Q) Budget and Financial Reports

Annual Report compiled by Renee Lehnen, Board Secretary