

President's Report, Annual Meeting 2012

Funny thing – we've built a third of the Eastern Trail, and a few of us had hoped for a breather, maybe some time to just enjoy the 20 mile (almost uninterrupted) stretch from South Portland to Kennebunk. But nooooo...another funny thing: build a trail, and they will come. Make no mistake: they're here! There are 14 events scheduled on the ET for 2012, and little doubt more will be added. Looking for a 5K, a fundraiser, or a triathlon? Look no further, and grab your calendar.

This week may be the busiest the Eastern Trail Alliance has ever, uh, enjoyed. Another landmark for the ET: the opening of the 4.4 mile Saco-Old Orchard Beach section takes place on May 16 on the beautiful Thornton Academy campus. The next day we look forward to the 2012 annual meeting in Wells, and on Friday a first for the ETA: the Spring to the Trail event, celebrating with our East Coast Greenway Alliance friends the 1st twenty miles of one of the most scenic sections of the ECG: the Eastern Trail. Saturday, several ETA trustees will attend the first-ever ECG National Trail Council meeting hosted by the City of Portland.

And there's so much more going on. Most notable, perhaps, are the monthly meetings of the SETA – the Southern Eastern Trail Alliance. The new frontier is Wells, South Berwick, Eliot and the other towns in southern York County through which the Trail will meander. The hope now is to generate excitement in this southerly tier of towns. You don't need to live there, but consider attending a SETA meeting. Let's push this trail to Kittery!

The past 12 months have seen a number of ET highlights: the unforgettable spectacle of 400 Kennebunk Elementary School students helping to celebrate the Turnpike Bridge opening in September, the completion of the Saco-OOB section in November, the introduction of a premier new trail guide in December, putting longtime Trustee Larry Glantz to work to update the ETA website over the winter, and working with the Town of Scarborough to hire an engineering firm for design of the 0.8 mile section that will close the gap between the Nonesuch River and the South Portland town line.

The reception that this trail is getting is little short of phenomenal. We get reports constantly of smiling faces, hundreds of users on weekends, compliments from those new to the trail, offers of Eagle Scout projects to enhance the trail. An overnight sensation...15 years in the making.

A pat on the back to all.

Bob Hamblen
ETA President