

OH BIKE MINI-NEWSLETTER – DECEMBER 2021

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Message from the President



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Dear OHBTC Members:

Cycling season is winding down, and there was no board meeting this month. We have had several group rides where we enjoyed each other's company. Please feel free to post rides even if it is a new route! You can contact me anytime. Again, thanks for your help and support of the club!

Donaro Gardner

News from the Trails - Mt Vernon Trail (by Ron Altemus, Trail Ride Coordinator)

The Mount Vernon Trail (MVT) is one of the oldest bicycle trails in the DC Metro area, dating back to the early 1970s. Over the years, it has seen an increase in its length and it now traverses 18.5 miles alongside the Potomac River from George Washington's Mount Vernon Mansion southern trailhead to Theodore Roosevelt Island as its northern terminus. The MVT is part of the George Washington Memorial Parkway and, as such, administered by the National Park Service (NPS).

When the early sections of the trail were being constructed, there were no best practices nor common engineering standards for multi-use trails. The NPS used historical design concepts for bridle trails and footpaths in the designing and alignment of the trail. By today's standards, the trail in many sections is too narrow along with many meandering curves. As I like to point out, "no tree was harmed in the construction of the trail."

Nonetheless, the trail is very popular, providing recreational opportunities, serving Northern Virginians as a commuter route into Alexandria, Arlington, and Washington, plus affording visitors a unique means to reach Mount Vernon. The trail connects with a number of other local trails, including the Four Mile Run Trail (and from there, the Washington & Old Dominion Trail), the Woodrow Wilson Bridge Trail, and the means to cross the Potomac via either the 14th Street or Memorial Bridge to reach the C&O Canal

Towpath trail, Capital Crescent Trail, Rock Creek Park, and the Anacostia Riverwalk Trail. Numerous OHBTC routes use the Mount Vernon Trail to reach one of these trails.

The Mount Vernon Trail is showing its age. Pavement and bridges are deteriorating, with tree roots making some sections a very unpleasant bumpy ride. More people are using the trail, not all of whom are experienced cyclists. The NPS issued a study on improving the MVT in May 2020, which proposed a 10-year overhaul and enhancement of the trail. The study can be downloaded from the NPS website: <https://parkplanning.nps.gov/document.cfm?parkID=186&projectID=95147&documentID=103209>

Volunteers are instrumental in helping maintain the trail and providing visitors to the park with an enjoyable experience. NPS offers several volunteer opportunities, which include trail maintenance and trail patrol. Living only a few hundred yards from Fort Hunt Park, I have signed up for the trail patrol, and incorporate those duties into my regular rides on the Mount Vernon Trail. Trail patrol volunteers are only required to do two patrols per month from March through November, though for me, I ride the trail year-round. For the most part, trail patrol responsibilities are answering informational inquires such as how far to the mansion, the next port-o-let or water fountain, where's a good place to eat, and is there a bike shop convenient to the trail. We only provide maintenance assistance to the extent we feel comfortable and/or have the necessary tools. Raising or lowering seats on rental bicycles is a common occurrence, though. Trail patrol members have no enforcement capabilities, but we do ask trail cyclists to call out/signal when passing other trail users and we remind pet owners that they are in a National Park and their dogs must be on leash. We will call the U.S. Park Police for egregious abuses of trail behavior.

Friends of the Mount Vernon Trail was recently formed to help the NPS maintain the trail. Their efforts are aimed at maintenance-type items, such as clearing invasive plants and other vegetation, trash removal, root heave removal, and applying non-skid paint on some of the bridges. Upcoming volunteer events can be found on their website: <https://mountvernontrail.org/events/>



The coastal flooding event of October 29-30 saw several sections of the trail south of Alexandria inundated with tree trunks, smaller limbs and branches, and a lot of trash. Where the flooding occurred,

the trail was inaccessible for bicycling. I went out on trail patrol on the morning of Saturday, October 30, between Riverside Park and Belle Haven Park. The extremely high tides had deposited large amounts of debris on sections of the trail, as witnessed in the pictures above.

NPS crews, along with volunteers from the Friends of Mount Vernon Trail, cleaned up the sections nearest Belle Haven Park by Sunday morning, October 31. The sections farther south were completed by Monday, November 1.

For those club members that ride the Mount Vernon Trail on a regular basis (or any trail, for that matter), volunteering can be a satisfying way to get even more out of your cycling experiences.

Oxon Hill Bicycle and Trail Club Board Meeting Minutes

Date/Time	No November Meeting!
Attendance	N/A

The OHBTC Board of Directors did not meet in November. The next meeting of the board will be on Zoom on December 13, at 5:00 pm. All club members are invited to attend. A link and agenda will be sent out a few days before the meeting.

Editor's Note

This is the Oxon Hill Bicycle & Trail Club, right? Even though, as Donaro said in his President's message, "cycling season is winding down", we can still get out there and walk on those trails. The board is considering a suggestion that we add hikes to our winter schedule. What do you think?

Remembering Sharon Chalmers

Long time OHBTC member Sharon Chalmers died on October 26, 2021. She was 75 years old. She and her husband, Walt, were active members in the bike club. She was enthusiastic about biking, running and hiking. You may remember her from doing a ride together, helping direct parking at the Rural Legacy Ride, checking riders at the Indian Head 100 or attending Volunteer Dinners and Annual Meetings. She was interested in people and became friends with people throughout the area and beyond. A few years ago, she developed Parkinson's Disease but continued to bike and participate in OHBTC events whenever she was able. We send our sincere sympathy to Walt, her family and many friends.

