

ETA Bids “*Later*” to Veteran Board Members

Life is all about coming and going. New faces enter and enrich our lives, hopefully for many years, but sometimes for only a few memorable moments. At some point we look back and realize how much he or she adorned our days, via a quirky personality, sharing the best coffeecake recipe ever, or a simple matter of being a steady presence when so much around us shifts.

The Eastern Trail is first and foremost...a trail. It's 21 and growing miles of outdoors that thousands of users flock to and benefit from – perhaps most of all during trying times?

And “behind” that trail -- those that have come together to hatch the idea, to persuade others, to inform decision makers, to sketch out the dream -- is the Eastern Trail Alliance. The ETA is, quite simply, its people. Back in the day it was supporters like John Andrews, Tom Daley, Maggie Warren and Dave Wood, Madge Baker, and Mac Sexton. Those who laid the groundwork for what's in place today. As some like to say, “We stand on their shoulders.”

The ETA doesn't have a wall or a hall for inscribing the names or likenesses of those who were here to seize the idea, launch the effort, persist when everything pointed to “what for?” If it did have such a wall, then create a bit of space for two more: long-time volunteers, members of the Board of Directors and “those who could be counted on,” Bob Bowker and Jim Bucar will be stepping aside at the end of June.

Bob's everlasting claim to fame is the Maine Lighthouse Ride – it was his idea. The ETA needed a fundraiser, and a bike ride generating registration fees was Bob's brainstorm. First staged in 2004, the event was then known as the Eight Lighthouse Ride. Year two took place during a hurricane, with fewer than two dozen hardy souls hitting the course, with various tales of just how far they pedaled. The ever creative Maggie Warren liked the sound of “Maine Lighthouse Ride,” and so it became. Before long the ride had to be limited to 1,200 entrants and we were scrambling for volunteers to staff rest stops, registration tables and the food and beer tents.

Jim relocated to Maine upon retiring from a 44 year teaching career at the Hopkins School in Connecticut in 2009. Like Bob, he makes his home just a stone's throw from the Trail, and chose to involve himself with the ETA after discovering the Trail and enjoying pedaling through Old Orchard Beach, Scarborough and Saco. Jim has been the primary MLR photographer for several years, is always willing to proofread documents, and stepped up to conduct a second year of user count tabulations in 2018, resulting in “The Economic Benefits of the Eastern Trail in Southern Maine,” second edition.

That report determined that user numbers had jumped from about 90,000 annually in 2014 to over 250,000 a year in 2018. And have you seen the number of trail users and parked cars in the past couple of months?

The ET exists through the efforts of a multitude of community-minded people. As with all efforts put forth by you and I and our neighbors, some individuals stand out. Bob Bowker and Jim Bucar have given selflessly to what has become a decades-long effort. Gentlemen, it would have been a very different ride without you – many thanks, and Happy Trails!