

## MOV Polio Support Group Visits Washington Works Nature Trails

1200-1400 hr, 10/17/23

October is World Polio Month which raises the awareness of polio vaccination. Two polio survivors had heard that the Washington Works volunteers along with Eagle Scout projects had developed three wheelchair accessible trails at the WW Nature Trails. They visited the site to see how accessible the trails were and whether to recommend the site as an opportunity for the mobility challenged to get out and spend some time in nature. David Johnson, a WW retiree, met Pat and Janice Kelly, Warren and Judy Peascoe, and dog (Bonnie) to give them a tour of these trails. This was a good test for the trails as Pat had a narrow wheel manual wheelchair and Warren had a powered wheelchair. A rake was brought along in case the fallen leaves became an issue—they were not.



Though the trails are relatively short, the group spent a leisurely 2 hours taking in the sites and history. The wheelchair accessible trails have a packed gravel base. The powered wheelchair had no problems. The manual wheelchair benefited from some assistance from a pusher, though it managed the trails and did not wear-out the pusher. Their conclusion was that the trails would be well received, but the giggling due to the rough surface may be an issue for someone with a back condition. They also recommended that visits not be solo since the site is somewhat isolated.

So what was so interesting that we talked ourselves into a 2 hour tour. The discussions included the following:

- Site History---The initial trails were opened to the public in 1992. Additional trails were added beginning in 2010. The pond and dam were rehabilitated in 2014 along with the construction of a vernal wetland in the Lower Meadow. The site is currently administered by the Chemours Co. and maintained through a network of site and community volunteers.
- Habitats---These wheelchair accessible trails traverse meadow, wetland, pond, forest edge, and creek habitats that are also frequented by local birding enthusiasts.
- Eagle Scout Projects---There have been a dozen Boy Scout Community Service projects for the rank of Eagle Scout that have enhanced habitats, promoted accessibility and outdoor education. These 3 gravel trails, viewing platforms, benches, and bridge across the wetland are the result of 5 eagle Scout projects. The most recent one was completed this summer & fall by Sam Marks who's project developed the trail through the Lower Meadow and across the Wetland bridge.
- Flora & Fauna--- 50 species of trees and bushes have been labelled with their common and scientific names. There are artificial nesting boxes for songbirds, owls, ducks, and bats. 150 flowers have been identified. There are coverboards for observing snakes and bugs that like to live under such. There is an Insect Hotel that was populated with habitats favoring insects. There is a new display for the "Merci Oak Trees" donated to the site by the Wood Co. Parks Dept.
- Information Kiosks---There are three information kiosks along these trails showing maps and educational materials to aid class field trips. There is also a demo display for the first post which is hoped to become a Poetry Trail.
- Future---There is a grant application submitted to develop a 30x30' shelter to support outdoor education field trips.



Pat and Janice at the Poetry Trail Demo



Warren on the bridge over the wetland



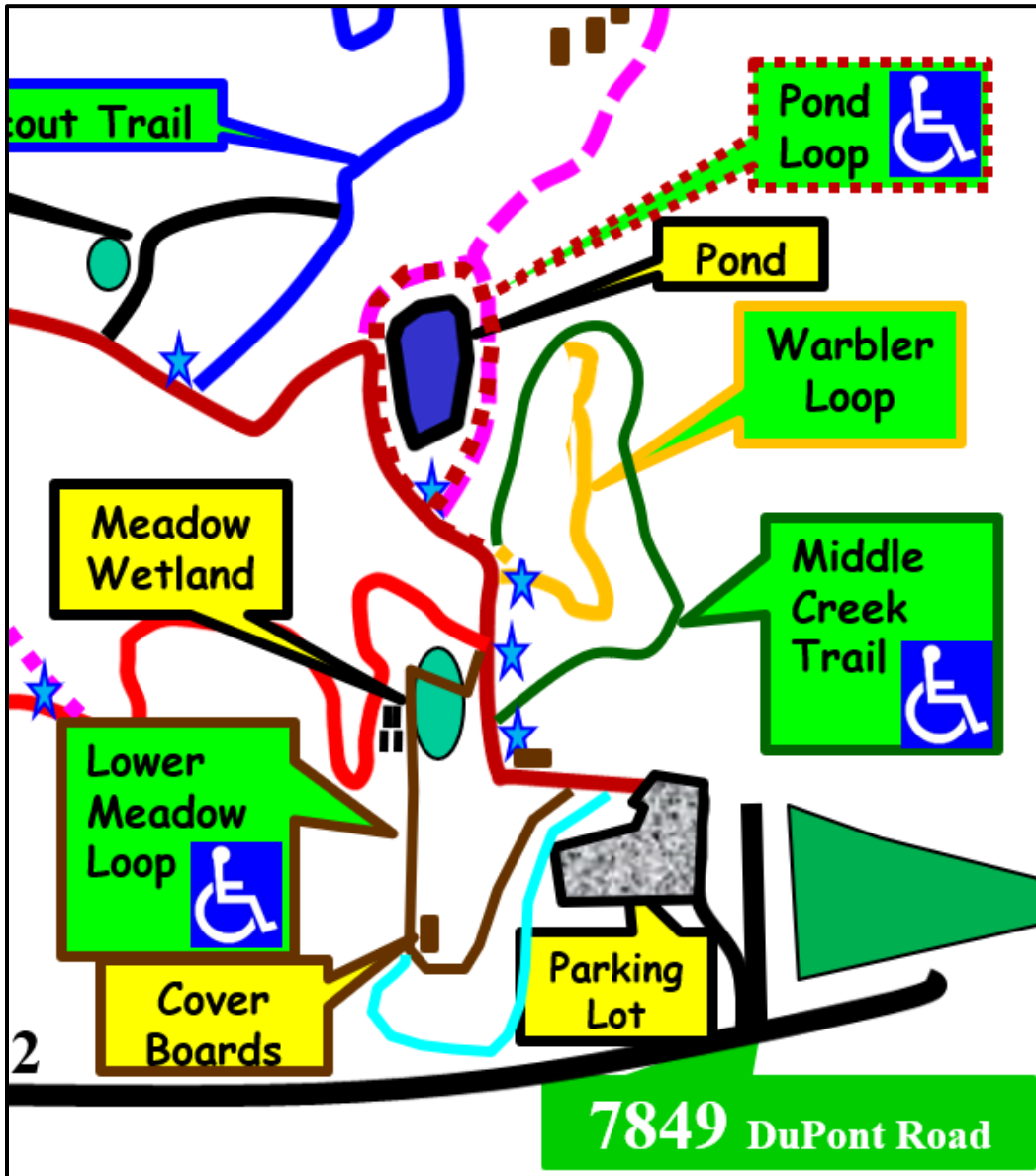
Checking out the new sheltered seating at the pond



Bonnie, Warren, Dave Johnson, Pat and Janice on the Middle Creek Trail



Trailhead Kiosk



Map of the wheelchair accessible trails in the lower area of the Washington Works Nature Trails