

Tomifobia Nature Trail Newsletter

Spring 2025

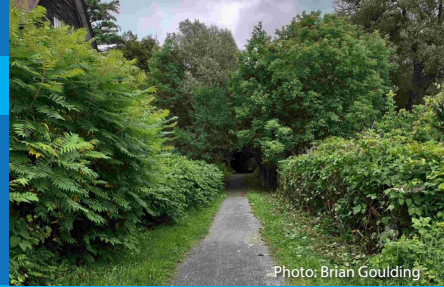


Photo: Brian Goulding

Walking while quietly observing, is to discover the beauty that surrounds us.

2025 Annual General Meeting

Saturday May 3rd, 10 A.M. (arrival as of 9:30)

Saint-Barthélemy Church (basement)
911, rue Clough, Ayer's Cliff



Photo: Marc Théberge

Spring Greetings to members and friends of the **Tomifobia Nature Trail (TNT)** and especially this year we welcome our American visitors who love our trail. Take for instance our trail-friend, Heather, who pedals her way from near Newport, Vermont, to Ayer's Cliff many summer days. *(Politics should not be allowed to ruin friendships.)*

We can imagine our members asking these days, "Isn't the trail transferred to the **Massawippi Conservation Trust (MCT)** yet?" www.massawippi.org The answer is not quite yet, but it looks like it might happen after June of this year. *(It's very complicated so you will find some more details in the last portion of this letter).* The delay means we had to renew our insurance and continue the expensive trail maintenance into the summer. So please, if you have not already, send us your 2025 donation to support the **Tomifobia Nature Trail**. We have an agreement to pass any surplus funds at the time of transfer to The **Massawippi Foundation (FMF)** which will fund and plan trail maintenance in the future along with our own volunteers and they will also send you your tax receipts. All our TNT members will become FMF members and the FMF have two funds dedicated to the TNT: the *Tomifobia Endowment Fund*, currently pledged for \$1 million and the *Tomifobia Maintenance Fund*, funded by the FMF and donors. These two funds are to ensure the permanence of the TNT. **(PLEASE NOTE: If you do not wish to become a Massawippi Foundation member notify us at info@sentiernaturetomifobia.org.)**

We will soon see the "birders" walking along the trail with their cameras and long lenses snapping nature shots to be shared on social media link. In an evening some of us have had the pleasure of seeing the eagles flying over the Knight Sanctuary (*Curtis Road*) to roost in the pine trees on the far side. Why not re-visit Tim Doherty's and André Vein's video they made last year of our trail in the valley?

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=X1eYlnLgDjM>

Trail Report

2023 — It was a rough year with area flooding in August. Beavers had a couple of culverts partially blocked but there was record rainfall which overwhelmed the entire drainage system and caused some expensive washouts and not only on trail property. With the land being saturated, many big old willow trees fell across the trail and had to be cut up and removed by our contractor, Emile Fecteau, and his backhoe along with our faithful trail worker and good neighbor, Gilles Garand, handy with his pickup, chainsaw and tractor who also mows our trail edge in the summer as needed. The large washout near a cast iron culvert north of Curtis Road, which obliged understanding travelers to ford across a shallow stream walking their bikes *(after some initial stabilizing work)* was finally repaired by our main contractor, Simon Jubinville.

Following a professional plan from MTQ engineer, Jeff Schoolcraft, the south approach ramp repair of the most essential bridge number 4 was started by Grondin Construction who finished the steel frame late in the fall. A sturdy barrier to dissuade fearless adventurers had to be installed before final decking was done later.

(Our four bridges are numbered from Ayer's Cliff going south).

2024 — People were disappointed in the spring to see the barrier still blocking the trail but Grondin Construction had to order special preserved timbers to finish decking on that south end of bridge 4 but finally it came and the bridge was open to the cheers of many in mid July. The long, hilly detour up Laflamme Road and then on to Tomifobia on a rough town road was finally over.



Photo: George Foster

2024–2025 — During the past snowy winter our board member, Claude Fortin, groomed much of the trail for cross country skiing. This drew some happy smiles. This spring Claude will use a new mini-grader to groom the gravel surface of the trail—something well overdue. Some additional



Photo: Claude Fortin

surfacing material will be applied in some areas along the trail. We say: “Thanks, Claude, for all you do for the trail.”

We say thanks also to Kristen Banham (*who manages the website and social media*) and Amy Whitcomb, our bookkeeper.

Also this year we need to replace or repair our gates which discourage unauthorized vehicles. Some shoreline work is needed at KM 6 and possibly other places to be determined. We will continue to use a special mesh steel fence to stop beavers blocking some vulnerable culverts which can save thousands of dollars.

The Trail Transfer to the Massawippi Conservation Trust

Due Diligence

In 1993, our corporation (now *Les Sentiers Massawippi Inc.*) purchased the 160-acre rail property between Ayer’s Cliff and Ville de Stanstead to create a “rail trail” of sufficient width so that the public, walking or on bicycles, could travel entirely on that unbroken rail infrastructure to avoid the sometimes deadly dangers of a municipal road. We have invested to date over one million dollars cash in the trail infrastructure to do this. We are also eligible, as a section of *Route Verte*, to receive up to \$33,000 to cover 50% of trail expenses (*now extended to 2028*).

Before we donate the property, our own Due Diligence is to guarantee to our members and the public that a new owner will also have such a goal and that this will be adequately described in the deed of transfer. The 18 farm crossings need to be identified and preserved in the deed for the peace of mind of our neighbors. (*We have found that there are no acquired legal rights to these long accepted crossings.*) Public liability insurance for bicycles will have to be continued.

The Due Diligence of the prospective new trail owner (MCT) is being done at their expense by the engineering firm EXP which is assessing the trail structures (*for the most part bridges 1, 2, 3, and 4*) and is expected to complete their report by June 2025. Our Board will get a chance to review the final report.



Photo: Marc Th  berge

A little “Q” and “A”

Q: What is the basic cost to simply own the 160 acres Tomifobia Nature Trail?

A: It’s around \$3000 per year which includes taxes and insurances. (Of course maintenance, repairs and administration costs bring this up twentyfold.)

Q : How much of the 160 acre property is now bike path infrastructure, ditches, culverts, bridges etc.?

A: About 50 acres

Q: Are security patrols going to be on the trail?

A: Some regular local trail users have offered to report problems and Richard Violette has met with the MRC who are initiating a new trail surveillance patrol project on area trails.

We wish you “Happy Trails” 2025!

—Your TNT Board



Photo: Carole Muir-Norrie

Contact Us

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(Registered charity
133444166 RR001)

For donating and membership information go to our website below.