

WCTC committee members welcomed in Indianapolis

The Whitewater Canal Trail Committee officers and members were welcomed Monday, October 5th, in Indianapolis at the Indiana State Museum at White River State Park and by the Indy Parks and Recreation Greenways Administrator.

Committee members were impressed by the Indiana State Museum's remarkable exhibit of the Gronauer Lock, one of the wooden canal locks used to raise and lower the boats to different levels on a section of the Wabash and Erie Canal during the mid 1830's to the mid 1870's. Named after the lock keeper, Joseph Gronauer, the locks oak and poplar timbers were unearthed in 1991 during the construction of Interstate 469 east of New Haven, near Ft. Wayne. A large section of the 98 foot lock is displayed, along with tools used for the canal's construction and household artifacts recovered from Gronauer's house.

Despite the short life of the canal system in Indiana, it greatly inspired the early history of Indiana. It

inspired one state. But the \$10 million improvements bill of 1836 to finance the canal bankrupted the state, prompting the frugal Hoosiers to insist that state legislators adopt a new constitution to limit the General Assembly's powers to incur new debt.

Later in the day, Ray Irvin, the Indy Parks Greenways Administrator, met the group at the Central Canal Towpath, near Butler University. He distributed Bike Route maps showing that the Towpath is more than five miles long, from the canal's headwater in Broad Ripple to 30th Street. Along the way, bikers, walkers and joggers can enjoy two restored 19th Century bridges (one connects to the Gardens of the Indianapolis Museum of Art) and a new pedestrian bridge in bustling Broad Ripple Village. The trail is also linked to the city's bus system. IndyGo, making it a convenient and an integral part of the city's residents' daily lives. The canal provides drinking water to the city and the adjacent bike trails provide a wonderful way to exercise.

The WCTC's design team took away many ideas and applications for the signage, markers and even the crushed limestone trail surface for consideration on their on-going construction of the Whitewater Canal Trail between Brookville and Metamora in Franklin County.

Volunteers and new members are needed. The WCTC hopes to open a two-mile stretch of trail suitable for walking by Spring 2005. For more information about becoming a member of the trail, volunteering, or tax exempt donations, visit www.whitewatercanaltrail.com.

