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Wednesday, January 21, 2004

Mr. Mick Wilz  
7023 Castle Road  
Brookville, IN 47030

Dear Mick,

Thank you for inviting me on the hike of the Whitewater Canal Trail last Friday, Jan. 9, 2003. I thoroughly enjoyed the time and believe that many trails were hiked- not all of them were on the ground. After the Metamora community meeting in early December, I feel there is a heightened need and more interest than ever to begin a Friends of the Canal group which would support the Whitewater Canal State Historic Site first through a volunteer corps and then perhaps, as the group develops, through other programs and activities. The Division of Museums and Historic Sites is very interested in the possibility of such a group being developed through the Franklin County Historical Society and feel it would be a natural partnership for both groups.

Would it be possible for the Franklin County Historical Society to develop a committee of local residents, shop owners, etc. interested in volunteering at the site? Those volunteers, through their efforts would certainly be assisting to ensure that the Whitewater Canal and the Whitewater Canal State Historic Site are preserved for future generations-a goal that both entities share.

Site Manager Jay Dishman and the rest of the Whitewater Canal State Historic Site staff would be thrilled to have such a group to assist with the plethora of needs along the 14 miles of canal. I know you have been in communication about this directly with Jay and would encourage that now, as Jay knows where assistance is most needed.

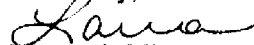
Should this idea become a reality, further steps would be needed by both the committee and our Division. First, a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) would need to be crafted with the Society. This MOU would state that the committee, within a certain period of time, would need to become an independent not-for-profit organization and obtain a 501(C)(3) status with the Internal Revenue Service. Accordingly, the Division of Museums and Historic Sites would certainly provide access to its lands along the canal for the development of a trail. Division staff would also be provided to supervise work groups for the physical work that is needed. The period of time to obtain the independence needed for this organization is certainly something that is open for discussion and would be agreed to prior the signing of a formal MOU.

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Again, thank you for the enjoyable day and I certainly look forward to hearing from you.

Sincerely,



Laura J. Minzes

Deputy Director of Historic Sites

Cc: Jay Dishman  
Steve Morris  
Kathleen McLary  
John Goss  
John Davis  
Terry Duffy