



Rinard Covered Bridge III reconstructed on the Wayne National Forest

A covered bridge within the Wayne National Forest and adjacent to one of the Forest recreation areas was destroyed by floods. The community raised the money to reconstruct the bridge which also serves as a stop on the Covered Bridge Scenic Byway. A celebration was held October 21st, 2006 to reopen the bridge.



Athens District Ranger Devela Clark speaks to a group gathered to celebrate the opening of the Rinard Covered Bridge.

The floods of 2004 and 2005 wreaked havoc on the Ohio and Little Muskingum River basins. As an added blow to the community, one of the most-loved covered bridges was first removed from its foundation by floodwater in the September 2004 flood event. The bridge appeared to be mostly in tact and plans were made to put it back on its foundations. The second blow came when it was smashed by the second torrent of water in January 2005. The bridge came apart as it washed downstream, but the Washington County Highway Department was able to save the main bridge components. The heavy beams and many other pieces were saved as the community decided what to do.

The Forest also sustained massive damage to the Covered Bridge Auto Tour. Most of the information signs for interpretive stops were damaged or washed

away, and the attractions themselves (in the case of Rinard Bridge) were destroyed.

Due to the hard work of many local groups and organizations, the Rinard Bridge is now firmly back on its foundation. The return of the bridge brought a renewed sense of pride and accomplishment to the area. FLEDA (Frontier Local Economic Development Association), was the organization that took the forefront in returning the bridge. They made it part of their mission to breathe new life into the bridge project.

From the beginning, the Wayne National Forest received call after call wanting the bridge returned to its former glory. We also received calls that our interpretive panel had been destroyed by the floods. The callers wanted the sign returned to the post.

After months of working long hours, many grant applications, and numerous meetings, the Rinard Bridge is solidly back on its foundations and again a viewing destination for people to visit. On October 21, 2006, FLEDA held the ribbon cutting ceremony for Rinard Bridge. Among the dignitaries and speakers were a representative from Congressman Strickland's office, a representative from Governor Taft's office, and former State Representative Nancy Hollister.

Among local dignitaries were two Washington County Commissioners and Athens District Ranger DeVela Clark. Sam Kidd, President of FLEDA served as emcee for the event which was well attended by local supporters.

Plans are underway to revamp the remaining parts of the Covered Bridge Scenic Byway. A team of Wayne National Forest has formed and started working with partners to reinvigorate the national forest byway and possibly secure State and national designation. The team has already updated and replaced the interpretive panel at Rinard Bridge. We timed the placement so that the panel would be in place for the ribbon cutting. The team is now working on rejuvenating the remaining parts of the tour, adding new stops, an audio component of the tour on CD or tape, and potentially developing a downloadable audio tour which would be available on our website.

An interesting side note, this is the third Rinard Bridge to stand at this location. The first bridge was built in 1871 and soon after destroyed in a flood. A covered bridge was built in 1876. This bridge was washed from its piers in 1913 and 1938, and both times was taken apart and reassembled on it's foundation. Today's Rinard Bridge is the third structure though many of the components date back to the 1876 bridge allowing it to keep its designation as an Historic Landmark.

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