

A Short Bio/Blurb of Craig Della Penna

For 12 years, he marketed rail freight and planned the start-up and managed the operations of seven transloading facilities in New England. Including the largest, single wholesaler forest products transloading facility in the northeast, in the 1980s in South Windham, CT on the CV.

In the mid 90s, with a background in RR history, he was invited to write a series of books about the history of old rail lines that became walking/biking trails.

This led to him doing slide lectures with a then-and-now focus on the history. Then as a RR and today as a rail trail.

Around 1997, when during the research for his 2nd and 3rd books on trail conversions in NY and NJ, he began hearing about communities in Massachusetts being opposed to the conversions. That was when he transitioned to speak not just on the history of the RR etc, but to give his real life experience of having biked-on and done research on over 150 trails in 8 states. He began to set up "Friends of the Trail" groups in several rail trail 'wars' in Mass, NH and VT.

In 1998, he was hired by Rails-to-Trails Conservancy as their New England Field Representative focusing on the policy end of building rail trails as well as public outreach—and teaching locals to speak compellingly on why it was necessary to convert their dead RR into a linear park. When RTC left New England, he became a Realtor. The 1st Realtor in the US specializing in the sale of property near to linear parks.

Now having given well over 1,200 lectures in 21 states and Canadian provinces, Craig is one of the country's most sought after motivational speakers on the economic development, tourism, and community development aspect of rail-trails, and their leveraging small amounts of public dollars to redevelop forgotten or derelict lands into treasured places.

He is also the author of 5 books and numerous op-ed/guest editorials on the value of smart growth development, and rail-trails. In their 10th anniversary issue, THE RIDE MAGAZINE named him as the most effective advocate for rail-to-trail conversions on the eastern seaboard.

He and his wife Kathleen, operate an award-winning bed & breakfast in a restored Civil War era house where the restoration was featured on HGTV. The house sits 8 feet from one of the earliest muni-built rail trails in New England.

He also is reassembling the longest rail trail in the Northeast. The 104+ mile Mass Central Rail Trail from Boston to Northampton and he publishes the most widely read, free, e Newsletter about this developing network.

