



# INKLINGS

Bulletin of Interpretive Ideas

Summer 2010, Volume 10, Issue 2

## Current Project List

- **Indiana Department of Natural Resources**  
*Interpretive Exhibit Mgmt.*  
*Indiana Dunes SP*  
*Turkey Run SP*
- **Bloomington Parks and Recreation (IN)**  
*B-Line Trail signs,*  
*Phase II*
- **Noblesville Stormwater Management (IN)**  
*Interpretive Signs*
- **Tippecanoe Co. Parks (IN)**  
*Interpretive Sign Design*
- **Elkhart County Parks (IN)**  
*Interpretive Sign Design*
- **Chikaming Open Lands (MI)**  
*Interpretive Sign and Brochure Design*
- **City of Grand Ledge (MI)**  
*Interpretive Sign Design*

## Keeping Focus

### Interpretive Strategies for Successful Media

#### *Lise Schools*

Over the years, I've experienced an increase in clients from non-traditional sites such as wastewater treatment facilities and historical preservation organizations. Although the subjects being interpreted may not be typical, the basic principles of interpretation still apply to the sign or exhibit.

#### **Focus on the Site**

An interpretive sign interprets the feature being viewed whether natural, historical, technological or other. It is important to keep the story focused on what the visitor is viewing.

Not only will site focus maintain interest, but it will keep the word count down to a manageable size. Due to limited space on a sign, branching beyond the site story will make the sign too wordy and you will lose reader interest. Generally, one main point with two or three supporting points is more than enough to fill the limited space.

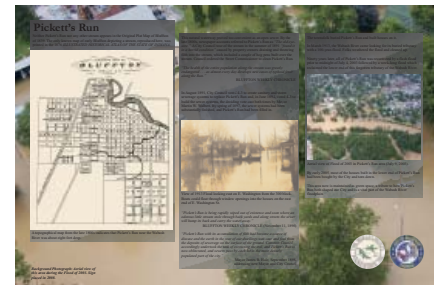


*This sign interprets the stone bridge in the background, the glacial origins of its stones and how the stones were cleared from farm fields by the first settlers.*

#### **Focus on the Visitor**

Your readers come from a variety of backgrounds. One thing is constant – readers don't have your background and expertise on the subject. They also may not share your enthusiasm. With this in mind:

- Keep the information basic. Avoid technical terms and description.



*This panel tells the story of a small stream, its relationship to historical flooding and how the problem was remedied. Rather than being technical, the text uses historical articles, photos, and maps to illustrate the story to its target audience of local citizens.*

- Don't overwhelm readers with information unrelated to the immediate site.
- Find the relevance of your site to your reader. Why should they care about the site? Is their drinking water better for it? Does the site represent an ecosystem once common to their ancestors?

Maintaining focus on the site and the visitor will not only help tell your message, but will also increase the number of readers.

Reference *Freeman Tilden, "Principles of Interpretation"*



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Interpreive Ideas  
P.O. Box 355

Okemos, MI 48805-0355

517/347-0861

lise@interpreiveideas.com

Lise Schools, Owner

Visit our website [www.interpreiveideas.com](http://www.interpreiveideas.com)