The Betsie Valley Trail continues to thrive. The spring clean-up is complete, repairs have been made, longstanding litigation is being settled, and planned projects are back on track. As a group the Friends remains strong in terms of both its Board and its membership. In addition to our long-term members we have new ones lending their support. In summary:

**Resurfacing the Trail between Beulah and Thompsonville:** Because this segment is used by snowmobiles whose treads damage hard surfaces, it was constructed with an aggregate surface. The aggregate contains sizable stones that work to the surface and make for a bumpy ride.

The DNR’s standard for unpaved bike trails is crushed limestone (limestone “fines”), and the DNR previously has advised that it would add this surface when funds became available. It appears that such time is near; thus, the Betsie Valley Trailway Management Council is applying to the DNR for a grant for such resurfacing. FBVT is one of many groups supporting the request.

**Addressing washouts near Country Farm Road:** This is a spot where over the years the Trail has washed out with every heavy rainstorm. Estimates to fix the problem with a new bridge or culverts ranged from $10,000 to $20,000, plus an interminable permitting process.

Looking for an alternative, Trail Care Coordinator Bill Olsen came up with the idea of a wooden grate that would allow water to flow across the Trail without eroding its surface. For $390 he bought 4x4s and with the help of Rick Robb and Moby Benedict built a grate that Gillison’s installed a few days later for $588 (also donating nearly $500 in supplies!). The arrangement (pictured below) seems to be working well.

**Trailheads at Adams and Mollineaux Roads:** FBVT has long recognized that the parking areas at these locations need improvement, even offering funds for that purpose. The DNR has agreed that the areas need work and has developed its own plans that include pit toilets like the one at the new boat launch. Crystal Lake Township is urging the DNR to go forward at Adams Road, but the DNR will do so only “when funds become available.”
AN END TO THE BOLLARD CASE?

Several years ago when the DNR proposed the construction of a new boat launch at Crystal Lake, litigation attempting to block the project was brought by several groups, including the Crystal Lake Property Rights Association. CLPRA failed in its effort to stop the boat launch but was able to negotiate a provision in the settlement agreement that steel bollards be placed on each side of the access road on the waterfront. CLPRA asserted that this would make the Trail safer by preventing users of the boat ramp from driving on the Trail.

Believing that the bollards were unneeded, were in violation of the original settlement agreement establishing the Trail and would pose a danger to cyclists using the Trail, FBVT intervened in the boat launch case. Early efforts to settle the case were unsuccessful, but the parties in late 2011 agreed to the entry of a preliminary injunction that prevented the DNR from installing the steel bollards but provided for the installation of flexible bollards for the one-year term of the preliminary injunction.

The temporary bollards were installed, and the parties have been able to evaluate Trail operation with them in place. CLPRA and FBVT hold to their beliefs for and against the use of bollards, but both recognize that the time and money inevitably involved in litigation might better be directed toward other ends.

We are pleased to say that the foregoing considerations led representatives of the FBVT and CLPRA Boards to enter into discussions that have led to a tentative settlement agreement. Barring some unforeseen glitch, this will end the litigation and allow the parties to concentrate on other matters. The Boards of FBVT and CLPRA have expressed the hope that this also will lead to an improved working relationship between our two groups.

--John Ester, FBVT President

THE TRAIL HAS FRIENDLY NEW NEIGHBORS

Last summer Kris and Daylene Welty bought the Betsie River Campsite (adjacent to the Trail and a mile east of Elberta). The Welts believe that the Trail is a big asset for the Campsite and have taken a number of steps to show their support.

First, they not only became members of the Friends, but they did so with a significant donation. Second, they have asked that we let Trail users know that they are welcome to stop at the Campsite to use their toilet facilities, get water or purchase food or drink at the Campsite store. (In addition to coffee the store offers breakfast and lunch items, such as pizza, hot dogs and hamburgers, as well as Hilltop ice cream.)

Finally, they are holding a fishing tournament on August 3rd, with a portion of the proceeds to benefit the Trail. Known as Big Al’s Skunk Run, the fishing tourney will be followed by a get-together with a live band. Trail users are invited to stop by to purchase some refreshments and to buy an event tee shirt.

Betsie River Campsite office and store: Stop in and check it out!
THANK GOODNESS FOR
VOLUNTEERS!

FBVT is a charitable organization whose purpose is to advocate, promote and encourage the development of the Trail. Under our agreement with Benzie County and the Betsie Valley Trailway Management Council we do this primarily by providing funds pursuant to grants approved by our Board. We also nominate a Trail Care Coordinator who, as an agent of BVTMC, is responsible for routine maintenance and for supervising the participation of volunteers in construction and maintenance projects on the Trail.

Thus, when we seek volunteers for trail work under Bill Olsen’s supervision, we are facilitating an arrangement under which the work will be performed for BVTMC rather than FBVT. On the other hand, those who help with the production of newsletters or the distribution of Trail brochures are FBVT volunteers.

Either way, the Trail needs your help. Please consider filling out the enclosed volunteer form and mailing it in the self-addressed return envelope also enclosed. In the meantime, many thanks to:

Charlie and Lucie Kinzel, Dick and Diane Munt, Bob McQuilkin and Sharon McKinley for folding, stuffing and mailing the December President’s letter.

David Lyon, Alan Marble, Flint Wall and Bill Olsen for clearing trees and branches from the Trail as part of spring clean-up.

Moby Benedict, Rick Robb and Bill Olsen for building the wooden grate.

Mel Pierce for mowing the Trail Between Frankfort and the Elberta bridge.

Dan Remahl and Pat Laarman for distributing Trail maps and brochures.

Adopt-a-Trail Volunteers who keep the Trail free of trash:

Friends of Betsie Bay — Jim Buzzell
Elberta United Methodist Church— Joyce Gatrell
Conundrum Café — Michelle Cannaert
Sleeping Bear Cycling Club — Doug Wozniack and Judy McQuilkin
Friends of the Betsie Valley Trail — Linda Frysinger and Bob Scholl

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Bryce Dreeszen, Treasurer
Sharon McKinley

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John Ester, President
Pat Laarman
Jim Ryan, Vice President

Terms expire July 2015:
Martha Garber
David Oellerich
Pete Weir

Directors Weir, Oellerich, Ester, McKinley, Dreeszen, Laarman, Ryan and Butt.
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(Those who have contributed since 11/1/12)

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Bob and Mary Young
Stephan and Gail Zachmann
Robert and Greta Zwinck

Bob McQuilkin, Sharon McKinley and Lucie Kinzel working on the President's letter.

Charlie Kinzel and Dianne and Dick Munt were also part of the December team.
Schedule of Trail Events

Saturday, July 20, 9:00 a.m. Port City Run
This is an annual event beginning and ending in Frankfort and using the Trail. Call 352-7251 for more.

Wednesday, July 24, 7:00 p.m.
Annual meeting of the membership, followed by a meeting of the Board at the Benzie County Resource Center, 6051 Frankfort Highway (M-115), Benzonia.

Friday, August 3 Big Al’s 1st Annual Skunk Run
This is a fishing tournament sponsored by the Betsie River Campsite, with a portion of the proceeds to benefit the Trail. The Campsite is at 1923 River Road in Frankfort.

Sunday, August 18, 7:30 a.m. Bike Benzie Tour
Created by the Benzie Sunrise Rotary Club, the Bike Benzie Tour is an annual charity ride for the benefit of area youth. It offers riders the choice of 17, 25, 45, 62 and 100-mile rides and features a rest stop at the Beulah Trailhead with cherry pie from the Cherry Hut.

Saturday, September 21, 10:00 a.m.—noon, Birding by Bike on the BVT
Bryce and Paula Dreeszen (275-7199) will lead a leisurely-paced bike ride for 15-20 miles along the Trail. Along the way we will be looking for bluebirds while we inspect and clean out bluebird boxes.

Sunday, October 6, 9:00 a.m. Betsie Valley Run
This is the 8th year of an event co-sponsored by the Friends of the Betsie Valley District Library and Crystal Mountain Resort & Spa in Thompsonville. The Run features everything from a Child’s Mile to a Half-Marathon, and most events utilize a portion of the Trail at a time when it is at its prettiest. Registration information and further details are available at http://betsievalleyrun.com/.

Students from the Frankfort Elementary School participate in Girls on the Run along with parents, teachers and friends.
The President’s Corner

As I near the end of a year as President, I am pleased to say that things are going well at the Trail. The Trail itself is in good condition, and it will be even better when the DNR agrees to fund the proposed improvement of the surface between Beulah and Thompsonville. Bill Olsen and his crew of BVTMC volunteers have done their usual stellar job not only of maintaining the Trail, but also repairing it at a fraction of original estimates.

The nine-person FBVT Board is also functioning smoothly. There are two things that I am particularly happy about as our Annual Meeting approaches next month. First, all three of the directors whose terms are up in July—our Treasurer, Secretary and Mailings Chair—have agreed to stay on for another three-year term. Second, as indicated above, it appears that the end is in sight for the bollard litigation.

One of the challenges for most new Board members is to figure out the rather complicated manner in which the Trail is run. As noted in the item about volunteers, the Trail is maintained by the Betsie Valley Trailway Management Council. We send a representative to BVTMC meetings and have the right to nominate Trail Care Coordinators. Bill Olsen was our first (and only) nominee; he was appointed Trail Care Coordinator by the Council and continues to serve in that capacity. He also was elected by the members of BVTMC to serve as Chair of that group.

Bill also has edited the Trailblazer newsletter for a number of years. He has now relinquished that job to me, and as I complete this issue I appreciate all his time on the job. I also administer the web site (if you would like to see this newsletter in living color, take a look there!). If you have any suggestions regarding the newsletter or web site, or the Trail in general, drop me a note at jester625@earthlink.net.

For the convenience of those looking to renew a membership, make a contribution or volunteer to provide help, we have enclosed a couple of inserts that should be self-explanatory. For those who prefer to pay on line, that option is available through our website. In the meantime, happy trails!

—John Ester

Birding on the Trail

Use of the Trail is not limited to biking and hiking. As recognized by the Benzie Audubon Club, the Trail offers fine birding venues—including Audubon’s David Harrison Memorial Overlook. As noted on the website for the new Sleeping Bear Birding Trail, “The Lookout is . . . a great vantage point for checking out waterfowl, cranes, and a variety of shore birds that frequent the Betsie River delta and marsh area.”

Another spot visited by Benzie Audubon at least annually is the portion of the Trail along the Betsie River north from River Road. In the spring it’s a great place for seeing a variety of warblers, as well as other passerines such as cuckoos, orioles, thrushes and flycatchers.

Other portions of the Trail are lined with nesting boxes used every year by bluebirds and tree swallows. Near Thompsonville the Trail is ideal for seeing butterflies and dragonflies.
A green line on your address label indicates that your 2013 dues have been paid. Thank you!

ANNUAL MEETING
Wednesday, July 24, 7:00 p.m.
Benzie County Community Resource Center
6051 Frankfort Highway (M-115)
Benzonia, MI 49616

AGENDA
Minutes from 2012 Annual Meeting
Financial report
Progress and planning reports
Comments from members
Election of three Directors

Visit our web site: www.betsievalleytrail.org
We need volunteers to help with Trail projects

ADOPT-a-TRAIL SPRING CLEANUP: We need individuals to walk the trail between River Rd. and Mollineaux Rd. (2 miles) to pick up trash and clear the shoulders of branches, rocks, etc. so it can be mowed. No tools are needed. Unisex; any age.

TREE REMOVAL: Each spring, and later as needed, we drive along the trail and, with chain saws, remove downed trees and branches, trim brush and to do minor Trail repairs. This requires some muscle.

CONSTRUCTION: From time to time, we build retaining walls, place signs, place benches, make minor repairs to the Trail and bridges, fashion and place mile markers, etc.. Some muscle and skill needed.

The Trail work projects start at 8-9:00 am and don’t last more than four hours. We don’t work in bad weather.

MAILING COMMITTEE: We send out 2 to 3 newsletters and a December appeal letter each year. After they are printed a group meets to fold, stuff, label and mail them. The bigger the group, the faster it goes.

ART FAIRS: And for those who are familiar with the Trail and enjoy talking to others who are interested, we can always use help at the Art Fair booths.

Yes, I / we would like to volunteer

Name(s) ________________________________

Telephone(s) (H) ______________________ (C) ____________________________

E-mail ________________________________

☐ TRAIL CLEANUP
☐ TREE REMOVAL ☐ CONSTRUCTION
☐ I have a chain saw
☐ MAILING COMMITTEE ☐ ART FAIRS

Mail to: Friends of the Betsie Valley Trail, P.O. Box 474, Beulah, MI 49617
Friends of the Betsie Valley Trail
(Please make checks payable to Friends of the Betsie Valley Trail)

☐ Membership Dues (Minimum $15 annually)
  ☐ Single ($15)  ☐ Family ($25)  ☐ Donor ($50)
  ☐ Patron ($100)  ☐ Benefactor ($250)  ☐ Sponsor ($500)

Please designate my contribution as follows:
☐ Operating Account (supports operations and maintenance) $_____
☐ Capital Account (supports construction) $_____
☐ Special Occasion / In Honor / In Memory: $_____

We also accept donations by credit card or PayPal on our website:
www.betsievalleytrail.org

(Please Print)
Member Name(s) __________________________

Primary Mailing Address

Street Address / P.O.Box __________________________

City, State, ZIP __________________________

Area Code, Phone Number __________________________

Seasonal Mailing Address (dates) __________________________

Street Address / P.O.Box __________________________

City, State, ZIP __________________________

Area Code, Phone Number __________________________

E-mail Address(es) (optional)

☐ Check here if you’d like to learn about volunteer opportunities with the Trail.