



BETSIE VALLEY TRAILBLAZER

DECEMBER 2014

TRAIL BOOSTS AREA ECONOMY

MAJOR TRAIL REPAIR PLANNED

After years of trying to control the growth of Willows through the Trail between 10th St. and the BLUA plant in Frankfort with herbicide, the Willows have won. They have destroyed about 1/4 mile of the Trail surface, to the point that it needs replacement.

The Trailway Management Council which is responsible for Trail development and operation, sought bids and has a contract with Team Elmer's of Traverse City to do the project. The asphalt and the gravel base will be removed and a new aggregate base, treated to retard plant regrowth, and asphalt surface will be replaced.

At the same time, a similar renovation will take place between the bridge over the Betsie River and the wooden walkway near the Elberta Marina Park, where the large white car ferry propellers are located. Root growth in this area has caused elevated ridges high enough to endanger both walkers and bikers. A new Bench also will be placed in the area.

Elmer's bid for the project was \$123,540.80. The DNR will grant \$45,000 and a \$5,000 grant has been received from the Oleson Foundation for this project. FBVT will provide the rest. Construction will start in the spring as soon as conditions allow and be completed before Memorial Day weekend.

Trails provide a lot of fun and healthy recreation. No doubt about that. But their effect on local economies often is not recognized.

Trail users eat, drink, shop, camp and use lodging facilities. And residents of trail communities travel less for recreation and spend more of their discretionary dollars locally. But how much does this help trail communities?

—A 2006 study by the Outdoor Industry Foundation found that the bicycle industry supported 1.1 million jobs, generated \$18 billion in federal, state and local taxes, and contributed \$133 billion to the U.S. economy annually.

—A 2014 Michigan Department of Transportation (MDOT) report indicated that bicycling provides an estimated \$668 million per year to Michigan's economy, including employment, retail revenue, tourism expenditure, and increased health and productivity. The benefit to Traverse City alone was \$5.5 million annually.

And the positive impact of trails on Real Estate, the Building Trades and on community improvement is documented in many studies. The National Association of Home Builders has found that trails

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(economic boost cont.)

consistently remain the number one community amenity sought by prospective home buyers. Homes near trails have more value. They are easier to sell and sell for more, increasing the local tax base. Notice how often realtors mention proximity to a trail as an asset to a home in their advertisements.

The Betsie Valley Trail gives the same boost to our area. While there are no confirming data for our trail, there are good indicators:

- The Benzie County Chamber of Commerce has reported that their most common phone request was for information about the Betsie Valley Trail and related lodging accommodations. Many of these calls relate to visits in the "shoulder seasons" (spring and fall), when business previously was slower.

- Before the Trail opened, there was a bike shop in Beulah, but it failed for lack of business. There now are four in the County and all are doing well.

- A drive down the Frankfort Main St., especially in the summer, is impressive; bicycles on the Trail, on cars, and parked in front of the bakery, ice cream shops and restaurants. That didn't happen before we had a trail. And notice the new and improved homes along Crystal Lake west of Beulah. What a change since the Trail replaced the railroad.

The Betsie Valley Trail is an important contributor to the economy of the Benzie area and the Friends of the Betsie Valley Trail have been the driving force in its inception and success. It is important that we keep the public and our governmental and business organizations aware of this.

And it is very important that we ensure long term funding to keep the Trail successful for future generations. That is purpose of the William R. Olsen Endowment Fund, which we recently established with the Grand Traverse Regional Community Foundation. Please review the enclosed description of the Fund. The future of the Betsie Valley Trail depends on the support of our members. We're counting on you.

STORMS AND AGING CULVERTS CAUSE PROBLEMS

The heavy rain storms which caused damage across the region this season did not spare the Trail. Between Mollineaux Rd. and Beulah the trail surface is aggregate, and repair of washouts is required almost annually. But this year, washout damage near VanDeman Pl. cost almost \$2,000 to repair.

The problem at the foot of Benzie St. just west of Beulah is worse. During heavy rain storms, culverts can't handle the water rushing down the street. The overflow washes across Crystal Ave., causing deep washouts in the Trail and carrying debris onto the Village park and adjoining property. Correction will require a catchment basin and recontouring of Crystal Ave. with curbing. The Trailway Management Council (BVTMC) has been working with the DNR and the Village of Beulah to try to get funding to correct this problem.

Another problem, bad enough now, may become a bigger problem in the future. When the railroad was constructed, culverts were strategically placed to protect the rail bed from washouts. But they are 125 years old, are ceramic and are starting to deteriorate. One near the large "turtle pond" east of River Rd. collapsed in October, partially draining the pond and causing collapse of the shoulder and part of the Trail. The BVTMC has applied for the DEQ permit and has requested bids for replacement of the culvert, but winter will delay the project until spring.

PLEASE SCHEDULE TRAIL EVENTS

If you are planning an event on the Betsie Valley Trail, please review the procedure for scheduling the event by visiting our web site and clicking on "Trail Use" and "Trail Ordinance." This will help you avoid conflicts with other events and comply with Benzie County's Trail Use Ordinance.

The ordinance lists special restrictions for "organized bicycle groups of 10 or more cyclists" that plan to use the Trail between Mollineaux Rd. and Beulah, and they must be registered before May 15th (Trail Ordinance requirement).



Bill Olsen and Phil Mix auger holes to replace signs.



The TART Trail staff (Chris Deyo, Pam Darling, Hattie Christie, Deb Westphal and Lee Kurt) spent a rainy "retreat" day touring the Trail with FBVT members Ed Butt, Bryce Dreeszen and Bill Olsen. Missing: Julie Clark, TART's Executive Director, who took the photo.

Thank You, 2014 Volunteers!!!

**Betsie River Campsite owners
Daylene and Kris Welty**

for
donating the proceeds of their
annual fishing contest.

**Conundrum owners Michele
and Rob Canaert**

for
caring for the steps near the
Audubon platform and bridge.

**Jerry Boyd, Nick Fant, David Lyon,
Phil Mix, Bill Olsen and Jim Ryan**

for
clearing trees and replacing signs.

**Marjie Anderson, Char Ester, John Es-
ter, Barb Johnson, Sharon McKinley,
John Ruckrich, Jim Ryan, Melanie Tay-
lor, Pete Weir and Jane Weisbrodt**

for
stuffing the June newsletter.

Stormcloud Brewery

for
hosting a fundraiser on our behalf.

**Joe Casebolt, Mel Pierce, Duane Nu-
gent, John Snyder and Kris Welty**

for
mowing portions of the Trail shoulder.

Oleson Foundation

for
their grant to help fund the Trail renovation.

BLUA

for
storing the tractor.

Don and Chris Smeltzer

for
storing the trailer.

The users of the Trail

who keep the Trail so free
of trash.



Volunteers who “stuffed” and mailed the June newsletter: Melanie Taylor, Barb Johnson, Jim Ryan, Jane Weisbrodt, John Ruckrich and Sharon McKinley (standing), and Char Ester, Marjie Anderson and Pete Weir (sitting).

PRESIDENT'S LETTER

“. . . To maintain, preserve and develop the Trail for present and future generations.”

In this newsletter we've written and shown pictures of the kinds of serious problems the Friends encounter on an ongoing basis — incursions of nature via tree roots that rip up the Trail, washouts caused by heavy rains, horrendous winters like the last year's, and the normal wear and tear of thousands of users as they bike, walk, run and blade along our beautiful Betsie Valley Trail.

Some are slow to develop, like the tree roots. Others, like the washouts, can happen literally overnight. All of them require the Friends to fund the necessary resources required to make the fixes necessary to "maintain and preserve" the Trail. And the funds required can be significant—more than \$140,000 just for the major repairs discussed earlier in the newsletter.

There are two ways you can help us fulfill the mission statement headlined above:
Now

. . .and later. The faster we build the Endowment, the surer we can be of our ability to respond to the inevitable problems Nature throws at us and keep our Trail a safe and beautiful resource for all its users, **now and in the future —for your kids and grandkids to use in beautiful Benzie County.** You can help **NOW** by contributing to the Olsen Endowment Fund at the Grand Traverse Regional Community Foundation using the enclosed envelope.

And you can also help **LATER** by utilizing Planned Giving, which offers lots of options to you. You can contribute without affecting present income during life, and you can use a wide variety of methods to ensure that your gift continues giving through the Endowment forever, even after death. A brief description of PG and a "how-to" matrix outline many of the ways you can contribute. And if you have any questions, you can talk to Phil Ellis, Director at the Grand Traverse Regional Community Foundation, which manages our Endowment [along with those of many more area organizations). His number is 231-935-4066.

As all our members and anyone who has ever used it knows, the Betsie Valley Trail, like almost all of Benzie County, is a hidden gem nestled in one of the most beautiful areas in the country. And as we talk with other trail organizations in the area, the future holds some bright and exciting possibilities. We want to ensure *the* great condition of our Trail in the present, and preserve for future users the marvelous benefits it offers in terms of healthy recreation, fun and a positive economic impact on the area.

But for this to happen, we need you to contribute now and in the future to help us continue to achieve the Mission to which the Friends are committed.

Happy Holidays!

Jim Ryan



Trails are good for business: Camille, Sam and Finn Ryan and Lucy and Ranie Fitzgerald (L-R) sell cookies and lemonade at the Mollineaux Rd./Trail crossing.



John Snyder mows the shoulders of the Trail near his home on River Road.

**Trail repair is expensive and we need your help
to continue to develop and maintain the Trail
now and for future generations.**

Please consider a gift to the Endowment Fund.

**Remember: Contributions after November 1st
count as membership dues for 2015.**

ADDRESS CHANGE?

If so, please email
akoclark@att.net
or call 231-352-6049

**BENZIE BUS WILL
SPOT BIKERS**

Want to ride any of the Trail one way?
- Contact the Benzie Bus at
231-325-3000 or www.BenzieBus.com
They will pick you up and carry
you and your bike to the Trail.

FBVT BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Terms Expire July 2015

Martha Garber
David Oellerich
Pete Weir, Vice President

Terms Expire July 2016

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Bryce Dreeszen, Treasurer
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Terms Expire July 2017

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Visit our web site: BetsieValleyTrail.org



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Look inside to see:

- the economic impact of trails to our communities
- repair projects and updates
- photos of people you may know
- ways in which you can help to preserve the Trail for future generations



**Make your gift to the Trail last
FOREVER
by contributing to the
**William R. Olsen
Endowment Fund****



As time goes on and costs increase, we need a permanent, secure income source to ensure we can achieve our mission: To develop, maintain, and preserve the Trail for future generations. Accordingly, the Board of Directors recently established the William R. Olsen Endowment Fund with the Grand Traverse Regional Community Foundation (GTRCF). All deposits in this Fund will remain with and be managed by the Foundation. The principal will remain intact and the income will be returned annually for construction and maintenance costs only, assuring that the Trail will remain an important asset to the community forever.

How can you participate?

- Write a check to GTRCF, with “FBVT Endowment Fund” on the memo line, and mail it to FBVT, P.O. Box 474, Beulah, MI 49617.
- Make a gift of appreciated securities or property and realize a larger tax savings than if you used cash.
- Make an Estate Gift which costs you nothing during your lifetime.
- Create your own fund with the Foundation which will generate a gift to FBVT in your name, each year, in perpetuity.

If you would like more information about the Endowment Fund and the various ways you can contribute:

- Contact any member of our Board of Directors
- Contact FBVT at betsievalleytrail.org
- Contact the Grand Traverse Regional Community Foundation
- Mail a note with your name, phone number and/or e-mail address to:

Friends of the Betsie Valley Trail, P.O. Box 474, Beulah, MI 49617

We are a 501(c)(3) corporation. Contributions are tax deductible.