It’s been a year of learning and getting up to speed for our Trail Care Coordinators John Rothhaar and Flint Watt. “We knew we’d be on a steep learning curve,” says John. “In addition to attending to maintenance, we needed to get to know volunteers, contractors, user groups, and the various governmental units involved.” Besides the routine maintenance items like tree and limb clearing, pothole filling, brush trimming and smoothing and filling damaged sections of the unpaved portions of the trail, several more significant projects were completed. Earlier this year, willow roots were already poking through a section of trail in Frankfort, which had just been repaved. An aggressive cutting and follow-up program kept the problem under control. Substantial crack filling and root cutting was performed to keep cracks and root bumps from getting worse. Warped and decayed decking on the boardwalk bridge between Frankfort and Elberta was replaced, thereby extending the life of the bridge, with over 50 new boards installed. These later two projects were accomplished with volunteer labor, saving substantial expense. John and Flint appreciate the support of our volunteers. In addition to the adopt-a-trail groups, Rick McNeil, Bryce Dreeszen, Dave Lyon, Kris Welty, Max Bromley, Marty Benczik, and Pete Weir all helped by working at various times. There are also a lot of ‘anonymous’ volunteers and neighbors who mow, trim, clear limbs, pick up trash and otherwise show pride in having such a wonderful amenity nearby. Thanks to all of you.

In the immediate future a major focus will be improving the section of Trail from Beulah toward Railroad Point along Crystal Lake. The section of the Trail paralleling Crystal Avenue is where the most work is needed. Our care coordinators experimented to see if the surface could be improved without a major investment in materials, but found that more significant work will be needed. An improved trail material was located, and successfully installed in several segments on a trial basis. Over the winter we will be specifying the work needed, seeking bids, and lining up the support and funding needed to move forward.

Trail Care Coordinators, John Rothhaar and Flint Watt, were joined by Dave Lyon, Kris Welty, Pete Weir, and Bryce Dreeszen to replace warped and rotting decking on the Trail bridges near Elberta.

Flint, John, and Dave (l to r) are shown fastening new deck planks in place.

There will be one more work day before winter sets in. Let us know if you can help at bvtcare@gmail.com
The President’s Corner
Betsie Valley Trail Highlights

Movin’ On Up...
Good news on the Endowment front. The William T. Olsen Endowment Fund is now north of $110,000, thanks to some of the many generous donors who share our passion for the recreation, healthy and economic benefits the Betsie Valley Trail brings to Benzie County. That’s the good news. The other side of that coin is that our goal is an Endowment balance of a minimum of $1,000,000. That amount, managed by the Grand Traverse Regional Community Foundation, can begin to generate the cash flow we can count on to fund sustainable Trail operations and maintenance. Weather damage, the wear and tear of normal usage and the need to provide improvements can all overwhelm the ongoing funding resources available for these tasks. Our Trail is now well into its second decade of life, and in the not-so-distant future will face significant repaving costs. So the Friends will continue to count on you, the community, our members and donors, to build the Endowment with donations and estate gifts and any other appropriate funding sources out there. We have a jewel of a Trail; we must preserve its beauty and utility for all.

Movin’ Ahead...
Every year, the Friends have a booth at each of the three Arts & Craft Fairs (Beulah, the CSA and Frankfort) to promote the Trail, distribute maps, sign up new members, accept donations and sell our tee shirts and hats. At each event, the #1 question we get is “What are you doing about improving that Trail surface over in Beulah?” We are working with the Betsie Valley Trailway Management Council, which includes all the stakeholders in the issue, to arrive at both short and long term “fixes.”

Short term we are hopeful that the resurfacing options being discussed (see the report from our Trail Care Coordinators) will soon result in a trailway that meets the safety needs of Trail users of all abilities and ages, as well as being acceptable to the local residents. Long term we continue to look at an enduring surface solution that likewise can work for all concerned.

Movin’ Toward the Future...
Trails continue to grow and spread all over the state. The Heritage Trail up in Sleeping Bear/Glen Lakes has been wildly popular, thanks to a massive cleanup after the horrendous storm that downed hundreds of trees and did serious damage to the area. That trail system links to the TART in Traverse City area and to trails throughout the Traverse Bay area, including connections all the way up to the “Mighty Mac” Bridge. East of us our good friends, the Snowbirds from Manistee, are working to secure trail rights-of-way to hook Crystal Mountain to Mesick and eventually Cadillac. Connections to a broad trail system can be made there which lead north, east and south. All of this holds some intriguing possibilities for us. So, if you take the long view, there are some exciting opportunities down the road for making the Betsie Valley Trail a beautiful and important link in our statewide network of trails. Your trail-using children and grandchildren will probably have access to a lot more trails to explore and so will the bikers, bladers, runners, and walkers who want to visit our beautiful county as well.

Jim Ryan,
President
On Saturday June 18th, Stormcloud Brewing in Frankfort celebrated their 3rd Anniversary, and on August 5th and 6th, the Betsie River Campsite held their annual fishing tournament, called Big Al's Skunk Run (named after Al Welty). It was a very wavy and windy day, which made for tough fishing. There were 16 boats in the tourney. The winners received a fine skunk trophy, and the proceeds went to the Friends of the Betsie Valley Trail. Daylene and Kris Welty (not pictured) own the Betsie River Campsite and have been fine stewards of the Trail, which runs along their property. We thank them for their continued generosity.

There's a lot going on with the property generously donated to the Friends by Marie Kuipers. The development, at the top of the hill coming east out of Beulah on US 31, currently has two occupied homes completed. Our lot is a beauty, with a great view of Crystal Lake, both Platte Lakes, and Sleeping Bear. It also, unfortunately, contains several segments of a large (27" diameter) fallen tree, as well as four trees that are dead and need to come down before former FBVT Board member and long-time area realtor Sharon McKinley can start showing the lot for sale. The good news is that we have scheduled the work for November 18, so the lot should be cleared and mowed by the end of the month. Next pre-sale step is for the development's owner to complete Association paperwork, but we can begin showing it in the meantime. If the lot sells at or near the expected market value, it will contribute a healthy 5-figure amount to our Endowment fund.

Stormcloud Brewing Trail Fundraiser

On Saturday June 18th, Stormcloud Brewing in Frankfort celebrated their 3rd Anniversary, and as part of the celebration they donated 50% of all sales in the pub to the Friends of the Betsie Valley Trail. The fundraiser is part of the Stormcloud Builds Community charitable efforts. The Friends were the group chosen for Stormcloud's inaugural fundraiser in 2014, and are pleased to have been chosen again on their 3rd birthday! Stormcloud hosted its first Fun Walk/Ride on the Betsie Valley Trail from Elberta to Stormcloud, and also donated $1 per participant to the Friends. Much fun was had, with many participants in costumes of all sorts, and a good community feeling was shared by all. Many thanks to Stormcloud Brewing!

On August 5th and 6th, the Betsie River Campsite held their annual fishing tournament, called Big Al's Skunk Run (named after Al Welty). It was a very wavy and windy day, which made for tough fishing. There were 16 boats in the tourney. The winners received a fine skunk trophy, and the proceeds went to the Friends of the Betsie Valley Trail. Daylene and Kris Welty (not pictured) own the Betsie River Campsite and have been fine stewards of the Trail, which runs along their property. We thank them for their continued generosity.
Thanks to all of our donors from November 1, 2015 through October 31, 2016

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Friends of the Betsie Valley Trail (FBVT) is a 501(c)(3) Michigan not for profit corporation, EIN 38-3092450. Since its inception in 1993 the purpose of FBVT has been “to advocate, promote and encourage the development and successful operation of a recreational trail on the former Ann Arbor Railroad corridor in Benzie County.”

In 2013 the Board of Directors of the Friends of the Betsie Valley Trail established the Friends of Betsie Valley Trail Endowment Fund with Grand Traverse Regional Community Foundation (GTRCF) to receive all contributions to FBVT’s William R. Olsen Endowment Fund. Deposits in this Fund will remain with and be managed by GTRCF. The principal will remain intact and income will be granted to FBVT annually for Trail construction and maintenance, assuring that the Trail will remain an important asset to the community forever. GTRCF is a 501(c)(3) tax exempt organization, EIN 38-3056434.

Ways to Give:

Cash: Write a check to Grand Traverse Regional Community Foundation (GTRCF), write FBVT Endowment Fund on the memo line and mail it to GTRCF, 250 E. Front St., Traverse City, MI 49684. Pledges of cash, usually a stated amount every year for up to three years, are always appreciated.

Securities: Appreciated securities are the most common type of non-cash gift. Publicly traded stocks are preferred because they can be sold easily. Contact the Community Foundation for assistance with a stock gift and they will work with you and your broker to facilitate a gift to the Endowment Fund.

Real Estate and Personal Property: A gift to FBVT of real estate is an attractive option for the donor because capital gains tax is avoided thanks to FBVT’s tax-exempt status. Gifts such as airplanes, automobiles, antiques, boats, furniture and equipment also may be accepted if the property can be readily sold. FBVT policy requires Board approval before accepting these kinds of gifts.

Expectancies: Expectancies are promises by a donor to make a gift at some future date. Since the gift is not a completed gift during the donor’s lifetime, the donor does not enjoy the benefit of a charitable income tax deduction. Contact Community Foundation and they will help facilitate a gift to the Endowment Fund. The most common types of expectancies are:

Estate gifts: Monetary gifts from estates are the most common planned giving method and do not require the donor to part with assets during life. They may be disbursed when the estate is settled, distributed over a period of time or both. They require a written statement in the donor’s will indicating that specific assets
will be transferred to the Grand Traverse Regional Community Foundation to be deposited in the Friends of the Betsie Valley Trail Endowment Fund. If the donor has specific recommendations regarding how the bequest is to be used, that request should be made in the will and in a separate written document to the Friends of the Betsie Valley Trail.

**Retirement Plans and IRAs:** Another type of expectancy involves naming the Grand Traverse Regional Community Foundation as a beneficiary of a retirement plan and specifying that funds are to be deposited in the Friends of the Betsie Valley Trail Endowment Fund upon the owner’s death.

**Life Insurance:** Similar to a retirement plan designation, a gift of life insurance is accomplished by naming the Grand Traverse Regional Community Foundation’s Friends of the Betsie Valley Trail Endowment Fund as a beneficiary of the policy on the beneficiary designation form. The donor is entitled to a charitable income tax deduction equal to the cash surrender value of the policy.

**Create your own fund with the Foundation:** Working directly with the Grand Traverse Regional Community Foundation, donors may establish their own endowment fund which will make a contribution to the Friends of the Betsie Valley Trail, in his and/or her name, each year, in perpetuity. The minimum required to create a Named Fund with the Community Foundation is $10,000.

**Contacts:**

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

FBVT’s web page, www.betsievalleytrail.org, has information about the Trail and the names and phone numbers of members of the Board of Directors

Grand Traverse Regional Community Foundation  
250 E. Front St.  
Traverse City, MI 49684  
231 935-4066  
pstellis@gtrcf.org

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This publication provides general gift planning information only and is not meant as legal, tax or investment advice. Please consult your own legal and financial advisors before making a sizable gift.
Rusty Spike Awards Presented

At the annual dinner of the Friends, on October 26th, President Jim Ryan presented Rusty Spike (from the old railroad bed that is now the Trail) Awards to outgoing Board members Ed Butt, Sharon McKinley, and Bryce Dreeszen in recognition for each serving six years on the Board; Ed as Secretary, Sharon as Newsletter Coordinator, and Bryce as Treasurer. We thank them for their service to the community, through their work with the Friends of the Betsie Valley Trail.

VISIT OUR WEBSITE: betsievalleytrail.org

WE WELCOME ALL FRIENDS AND TRAIL PHOTOS!

To receive our monthly e-newsletter, please send your e-mail address to: FBVTMI@gmail.com