The Friends of the Betsie Valley Trail are pleased to announce that their search for a Trail Care Coordinator uncovered not one, but two exceptional volunteers. John Rothhaar (left), and Flint Watt (right) answered our plea for help. Both have been long-time Trail users, members of the friends, and Trail work volunteers.

John Rothhaar has been a full year resident of Benzie County for five years, and part-time resident for twelve. He is a retired attorney, and previously lived in Midland, MI. He has had an active interest in rail-trails since the 1980s, was active on a citizen’s advisory committee that helped plan the Pere Marquette Rail Trail between Midland and Clare, and has been a volunteer worker on the Sleeping Bear Heritage Trail and our own Betsie Valley Trail. John and his wife, Barbara, are active bicyclists, paddlers and skiers, and they often travel with their bikes, sampling trails in numerous locations around the country.

Flint Watt has been a full-time resident of the area for fourteen years, and has been recreating in the area for over thirty years. He is a retired program administrator for the State of Michigan in Public Health and Environment. Flint enjoys biking, hiking, skiing and fishing with his family. He also volunteers for the Grand Traverse Regional Land Conservancy as a preserve steward.

Flint and John bring great passion for maintaining the Trail along with the skill sets to do the job. Thanks so much to both of them!

Bill Olsen has retired as Trail Care Coordinator after many years at that position, but he continues to be actively involved with the Trail as Chair of the Betsie Valley Trailway Management Council. Thank you, Bill, for your continued dedication to the Trail!

All of the help and effort our volunteers have offered over the years has been greatly appreciated, and John and Flint intend to continue to tap into that established network. They are always looking for additional help. If you are an existing volunteer and want to make sure we have current contact information, or if you would like to be added to our volunteer list, send an email to bytcare@gmail.com, call Flint at 231-342-9739, or call John at 231-383-5738.
Thanks to Carol Kraak for the lovely photos taken on the Betsie Valley Trail in the springtime.

Flora and Fawna (pun intended!) seen on the Trail this spring.
The President’s Corner:

SPRING ALONG THE BETSIE VALLEY TRAIL

This year’s winter in Benzie County was not as snowy as most, and not as cold as the last couple of years. But just to let us know who was in charge, Old Man Winter hung around deep into “springtime”, keeping it colder and wetter than usual. Then things dried up just enough to delay the morel season. But thanks to our new Trail Care Coordinator “dynamic duo” (Flint and John are profiled on the front page of this issue of the Trailblazer: Flint is the TCC and John is the Alternate TCC, but work together as a team) with our usual great volunteers, the Trail is in fine shape as the season opens.

Every year our biking/hiking/blading population grows and a quick look at the trailheads will give you a good indication of the Betsie Valley Trail's popularity. And for every vehicle you see at the trailheads, or the parking lot at Adams and River Roads, there are many more users who are year round or summer residents. They usually just bike or walk or blade over to the Trail. And of course we get many visitors to the area specifically because of the Trail --- just ask Betsie River Campsite or Conundrum Cafe in Elberta.

A 10-year survey on rural rails-to-trails users just completed this year in Pennsylvania came up with these revealing numbers:

- **GENDER** 54% male, 46% female
- **AGE**: 28% under 45, 25% were from 45 to 55, 29% were from 56 to 65, & 18% were over 65

And equally interesting:
- **USAGE**: 49% of users used the trails at least once per week AND average use each time was 60 to 120 minutes. So this 10-year research program by Rails to Trails Conservancy shows that people use trails for both recreation and health reasons. And the positive impact on the economy is also significant: the average amount spent on hard goods was $273/year, PLUS an average of $16.34 per person per trail use on food and beverages.

When we ask for your help in building the endowment fund, or for an estate gift, it’s because we need to ensure there will always be money available for the kind of maintenance and safety that you expect and deserve from the Betsie Valley Trail. Know that you are helping yourselves, your children and grandkids by preserving a beautiful and valuable resource for health and recreation - a resource that makes a **SIGNIFICANT** contribution to the local economy. So use the envelope enclosed or visit our website and decide how you can best support the Trail.

Have a great summer. And thanks!

Jim Ryan
LOOKING TOWARD THE FUTURE…..

Mark Coe, president of the Manistee snowmobiling group the “Snowbirds”, called me in April to talk about working together on trail opportunities for the future. I suggested he call Bill Olsen and the Betsie Valley Trailway Management Council and speak at their May 10th meeting, which he did.

By way of introduction, the Snowbirds brush, groom, sign and maintain 150 miles of snowmobile trails in three counties. They are not yet a 501(3)(c), but that is in progress. Mark handed out copies of their trail map with color-coded future trails.

A future trail from Copemish to Mesick has now been approved after ten years of work. There is a bridge which needs a new trestle, and the estimated cost of this is about $1.3 million. Until the bridge is funded and completed, the DNR has approved a route with a grade crossing of a street.

A great opportunity for everyone is the “White Pine Connector.” Mark said it is not "if" but "when" there is a trail from Thompsonville to Cadillac. If different entities work together there will be a better chance of this trail’s formation. Bill Olsen commented that BVTMC has met with other interested parties, including the Snowbirds, with an eye toward making this connection happen. Because of its legal structure, the BVTMC would not manage such a trail, but the BVT would benefit by that trail and so the BVTMC supports it.

Other trail extensions that Mark anticipates are from Turtle Lake to Interlochen and from Kaleva to Manistee. Mark is hopeful that the Turtle Lake to Interlochen trail can be approved in the next few years. The Manistee trail involves crossing a lot of private land and may take more time.

Finally, we are often asked about connecting with Empire and the Heritage Trail. That, too, offers some exciting future prospects for making the Betsie Valley Trail a part of an interconnected web of trails throughout northwest Lower Michigan, and we will continue to work together toward making that a reality.

Jim Ryan, President
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 the 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 donors 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 Region 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 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.betseivallytrail.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 East Front St., Traverse City, MI 49684
231-935-4066
plellis@gtrcf.org

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.
Stormcloud Brewing Company is celebrating its third birthday on June 18th with two events designed to raise money for the Betsie Valley Trail.

For the first fundraising event, Stormcloud will host a free Fun Walk/Ride on the Betsie Valley Trail starting at the village of Elberta and ending at the Stormcloud brewery and pub in downtown Frankfort. For each participant, Stormcloud will donate $1 to the Friends of the Betsie Valley Trail. The event will begin at 4:00pm at the Elberta Trail parking area. Fun Walk/Ride participants should gather at 3:45pm, and are encouraged to dress in creative costumes and decorate their bikes for a chance to win prizes from Stormcloud. A “Best Costume & Decoration” prize will be awarded to one adult and one kid. No entry fee is required.

For the second fundraising event, Stormcloud will host an event in its pub which will also benefit the Trail. 50% of all sales in the pub between the hours of 5-7pm will be donated to the Friends of the Betsie Valley Trail. Beer cake, grilled beer can chicken, and an outdoor beer garden with handcrafted Belgian inspired beers are just a few of the celebratory treats to be found at Stormcloud Brewing Company’s party.

Stormcloud will also have lawn games and live music in the outdoor space next to the brewery.

As part of Stormcloud Builds Community, Stormcloud Brewing Company selects one charitable organization making a difference in northern Michigan to share its message with Stormcloud’s customers and to help raise funding for the organization. Recipients are chosen every month during the summer season and quarterly thereafter. To date, Stormcloud Builds community has helped support 12 nonprofit organizations.

To learn more about this event, visit: stormcloudbrewing.com/birthday
CALENDAR OF EVENTS

Saturday, July 9, 9:00am: Benzie Audubon Young Naturalists Hike - meet at Adams Road parking lot. Hike on BVT. go to: benzieaudubon.org/schedule.html

Saturday, July 9, 10 am to 5 pm: Beulah Art Fair

Saturday, July 16: Port City Run, Frankfort

Wednesday, July 27, 10am to 4pm: CSA Art Fair

Wednesday, July 27, 4:00pm: Annual Meeting of the Membership at the Benzie County Resource Center, 6051 Frankfort Hwy, Benzonia, MI 49616, immediately followed by a meeting of the Board of Directors

Saturday, August 6: Betsie River Campsite Skunk Run Raffle/Fundraiser

Friday, August 19, 4pm to 8pm, & Saturday, August 20, 10am to 5pm: Frankfort Art Fair

Thursday, August 25, 4:00pm: Regular meeting of the Board of Directors at the Benzie Community Resource Center, Benzonia, MI

September 18, 9:00am: Run Michigan Cheap.com 5K, 10K, 10 Mile Run on BVT between Frankfort and Crystal Lake go to: runmichigancheap.com/frankfort-edition-918.html

Thursday, September 29, 4:00pm: Regular meeting of the Board of Directors at the Benzie Community Resource Center, Benzonia, MI

Friday, September 30 - Sat., October 1: Ragnar Relay Across Michigan - run from Muskegon to Traverse City passes through the BVT in the early morning hours of October 1st. go to: runragnar.com/event-detail/relay/michigan
Dr. Charles “Charlie” Kehr, passed away on April 22, 2016. A resident of Beulah since 1980, he was a founding member of the Friends of the Betsie Valley Trail, and was passionate about community development projects. He served two six-year terms on the Board of the FBVT. Charlie also served on the Benzie County Parks and Recreation Commission and was instrumental in working with the county and the Conservancy to obtain and protect the Railroad Point natural area on Crystal Lake. Charlie was named Grand Traverse Regional Land Conservancy’s Volunteer of the Year and was later named to the Conservancy’s Board of Directors. He was an active steward of the Trapp Farm Nature Preserve, near his home. We are forever grateful for his hard work and dedication to the Betsie Valley Trail.

Adopt-a-Trail Season!

Every spring, our Adopt-A-Trail volunteers clean up the Trail from Frankfort to Thompsonville. Current Trail Adopters are: Frankfort United Methodist Church, Conundrum Care in Elberta, Stormcloud Brewing in Frankfort, Crystal Mountain Resort & Spa in Thompsonville, the Sleeping Bear and Benzie Bike Clubs, and Jim Buzzell’s Crystal Lake group. If you are interested in helping out, please contact any of these groups, or John Rothhaar, info below. Thanks to all!

Trail Related Issues?

Trees down, washouts, etc. - please be on the lookout and let us know!
Contact Flint Watt or John Rothhaar at bvtcare@gmail.com, or call 231 383-5738 (John) or 231 342-9739 (Flint)

Thanks to Fall Newsletter Volunteers

Margie Anderson, John Kundel, Sharon McKinley, Nancy Patterson, John Ruckrich, Jim Ryan, Rosemary Tanner, Melanie Taylor, Mary Torbet, Tom Torbet, and Nancy Williams.
To receive our monthly e-newsletter, please send your e-mail address to: FBVTMI@gmail.com

ADDRESS CHANGE?
If so, please email akoclarck@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 BenzieBus.com. They will pick you up and take you and your bike to the Trail.

FBVT BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Terms Expire July 2016
Ed Butt, Secretary
Bryce Dreeszen, Treasurer
Sharon McKinley

Terms Expire July 2017
Roger Perry
Jim Ryan, President
Melanie Taylor

Terms Expire July 2018
Martha Garber
David Oellerich
Pete Weir, Vice President