Improvements to the Trail Between the Village of Beulah and Mollineaux Road

Users of our trail generally love it, but we know some sections are in better shape and more popular than others. For the first time in many years, there is some hope that the Trail’s Management Council is on track to make some badly needed improvements to the unpaved section of trail between the Village of Beulah and Mollineaux Road.

With the full support of the Friends, at its April Meeting, the Betsie Valley Trailway Management Council unanimously approved a contract with the Johnson Hill Land Ethics Studio to conduct an assessment of the Trail’s condition in that section, develop recommendations for trail repair, and provide cost projections. This is a necessary first step in getting improvements made.

There is no guarantee this design work will lead to implementation of improvements. Factors such as funding (we don’t know yet how much repairs may cost), permits, and buy-in by affected groups could derail or delay the actual improvements. But this is a major step, and there is much reason for optimism.

Johnson Hill believes they can complete their assessment and make recommendations at a Management Council meeting scheduled for May 23, at 4:30pm, at the Benzie County Government Center in Beulah. This will be an opportunity for the public to hear about possible improvements and provide input. The Friends will be well represented by the Board, but members are encouraged to attend.

So does this mean the Trail will be paved? The short answer is no. The legal settlement that allowed construction of the Trail in the beginning was clear that a number of special rules and limitations would apply to the section of trail between Beulah and Mollineaux Road. One of the restrictions was that the Trail cannot be paved.

There are several good reasons to improve the Trail even though it can’t be paved. If the loose sections of trail continue to deteriorate, they could become a safety concern. Providing a good solid, consistent surface will encourage more use of the Trail by pedestrians and bicyclists, so conflicts with motor vehicles on the narrow sections of Crystal Avenue are minimized. In its current condition the Trail is not attractive and discourages use.

There is some hope that we can make the improvements this year, but that may not be realistic. Rather than rushing to complete temporary repairs, your Board is trying to ensure the work is clearly thought out and performed well. We want to end up with a good quality surface that will last, and in the process promote some positive and lasting relationships with other stakeholders.

The Crystal Lake Property Rights Association represents landowners along the Trail, and that group has two representatives on the Management Council. It is encouraging that those reps voted in favor of the design work and seem to be quite supportive of making Trail improvements. Equally promising is the cooperative relationship that seems to be developing between trail supporters, including the Friends and the Property Rights Association.

Johnson Hill Land Ethics Studio is an Ann Arbor based design firm that has done a lot of landscape, park and trail design work in Benzie County and elsewhere in the state. In addition to substantial work at Crystal Mountain, the firm and one of its principals, Chet Hill, has worked on several projects on the Betsie Valley Trail, including the depot trailhead building in Beulah.

Stay tuned for future updates. We hope to provide more good news as this process moves along.

John Rothhaar and Flint Watt
Trail Care Coordinators
New and creative sign near the Turtle Pond!
A grate, designed and constructed by Bill Olsen, has been installed. This will help prevent clogs of the drainage culvert.

A welcome sign of spring
Among other pretty wildflowers along the Trail are Trillium (l.) and Marsh Marigold (r.)

THANKS TO OUR VOLUNTEERS
Special thanks to Chris Welty, Brad Steffens, Nancy Murray, and Blair Foote for their help with trail maintenance this spring. We would also like to thank those anonymous volunteers who mow, trim, clear limbs, pick up trash and otherwise keep sections of the trail tidy, without being part of any “official” activity. Your contribution is noticed and it makes the job of our trail care coordinators much easier."

THANKS FOR ADOPT-A-TRAIL SPONSORS
Thanks also to the groups that have participated in the Adopt-a-Trail program: The Friends of Betsie Bay, the Elberta United Methodist Church, the Conundrum Cafe, Stormcloud Brewing Co., the Benzie Bike Clubs, and the employees of Crystal Mountain. These groups have or will be completing their spring clean-up, and we are grateful for their past and ongoing support.

Calendar of Events
Thursday, June 29, 5:30 pm: Regular meeting of the Board of Directors at the Benzie Community Resource Center, 6051 Frankfort Hwy, Benzonia, MI 49616.

Saturday, July 8, 10:am - 5:00 pm: Beulah Art in the Park Fair

Wednesday, July 26, 10:00 am - 4:00 pm: CSA Arts & Crafts Fair

Thursday, July 27, 5:30 pm: Annual Meeting of the Membership at the Benzie Community Resource Center, 6051 Frankfort Hwy, Benzonia, MI 49616, immediately followed by the Regular meeting of the Board of Directors.

Friday, August 18, 4:00 - 8:00 pm and Saturday, August 19, 10:00 am - 4:00 pm: Frankfort Art Fair

Tuesday August 22, 5:30pm: Regular meeting of the Board of Directors at the Benzie Community Resource Center, 6051 Frankfort Hwy, Benzonia, MI 49616.
The President’s Corner: Looking to a Bright Future

Movin’ Ahead (Spring Update)
As we reported in last Fall’s Trailblazer, discussions continue on the possible upgrade of the Trail’s Beulah section running from Mollineaux Road into Beulah alongside Crystal Lake. As you can read in this issue of the Trailblazer, there is real progress being made in furthering that project. An engineering study funded by the Betsie Valley Trailway Management Council is currently underway. The surface being considered is already in use by TART Trails on the Heritage Trail in Leelanau County.

Changing faces
The bad news—the Friends’ Board will lose three members at the conclusion of our 2016-17 business year in July. The expiration of my third term as President means that I am “termed out” and one of those who will be leaving in July.
The good news is that we have excellent candidates to fill these vacancies and will have no problem filling the Presidency from the talented, experienced, and dedicated Board Members whose terms continue going into 2017-18. Officers are elected at the Annual Meeting, July 27 (see the details elsewhere in this newsletter) and all Friends’ members are welcome to attend. And, in Flint Watt and John Rothhaar, and their crew of eager volunteers, our Trail Care Coordinators program is in

New Challenges
If the BVTMC and the Friends can move forward on the Beulah resurfacing, it means we will need a capital funding effort to pay for the long-desired improvements. Once the numbers are in and we know what our fundraising goals are, we will be setting up a capital account dedicated to this project. We will be sending out updates on this via email blasts and a special project report once we have a clear picture of what exactly the project entails and what the funding needs are. Our existing paved Trail surfaces are aging and continue to need annual repairs. Again, we need funding for ongoing operations and this is why we urge you to contribute to our William R. Olsen Endowment, managed by the Grand Traverse Regional Community Foundation.

We all love the Trail and we need to support it with our time and talents, but also our treasure. Remember that the Trail depends on your continued generosity for its well-being, so please donate now and remember the Trail with an Estate or an Endowment Gift which will continue to benefit the Trail long into the future. Thanks for your continued support and encouragement over the last 6 years. It’s been a privilege to be a part of the Friends and to help support our beautiful Betsie Valley Trail.

Jim Ryan, President

Editor’s Note: We thank you, Jim, for your tireless efforts, leadership, and involvement with the Trail. We hope to see you out on your bike enjoying the Trail!

Please don’t forget to renew your annual membership if you haven’t already done so. Envelope enclosed.

Make your gift to the Trail last FOREVER by contributing to the William R. Olsen Endowment for the Betsie Valley Trail
If you would like information about the Endowment and the various ways you can contribute, please visit our website: betsievalleytrail.org

Friends of the Betsie Valley Trail, P.O. Box 474, Beulah, MI 49617
We are a 501 (c) 3 Corporation. Contributions are tax deductible.
ANNUAL MEETING
Thursday, July 27, 2017, 5:30pm
Benzie Community Resource Center, rm A
6051 Frankfort Hwy, Benzonia, MI 49616

AGENDA
Minutes from 2016 Annual Meeting
Financial report
Progress and planning reports
Comments from members
Election of three Directors

TRAIL MAINTENANCE CONCERNS?
Trees down, washouts, etc.
Contact Flint Watt or John Rothhaar at btvcare@gmail.com, or call
231 383-5738 (John) or 231 342-9739 (Flint)

FBVT BOARD OF DIRECTORS

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

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

Terms Expire July 2019
Anne Noah
John Rothhaar
Daylene Welty

It's time to show your continued support for the Trail by renewing your annual FVBT membership!
Please use enclosed envelope or visit our website betsievalleytrail.org