Trail Sees Record Use

This year started out with great uncertainty, yet it was a summer that saw more visitors to our region than ever before. We went from ghost town in early May, to a tourist mecca just weeks later.

During this entire period, the Trail remained open with distancing guidelines posted – and lots of folks decided to take advantage. Many dusted off their bikes and came to area to enjoy the Betsie Valley Trail. Use of the Trail over the summer was estimated to be over double the previous year.

Unfortunately, at the same time the Trail was experiencing tremendous use, the health crisis put in question our state operating funds and eliminated donations we would normally receive from events. We were also unable to move forward with the planned trail reconstruction work of a 1½ mile segment along Crystal Avenue.

Future is Bright

The good news is, many of our plans which were once on hold are quickly becoming high priorities. On page two, read an update about the Crystal Avenue work and get the scoop on some very robust projects planned for the Trail.

The Friends of the Betsie Valley Trail are dedicated to the successful operation and development of the Trail – an amazing and widely admired resource we are fortunate to have. However, the Trail cannot thrive without contributions, both monetary and volunteer, from people like you. We hope you will be inspired by the ambitious plans we describe on page two and will pledge your continued support.

Facts about the Betsie Valley Trail

- The Trail right-of-way is owned by the Michigan DNR. The Trail is managed by Benzie County through the appointment of the Betsie Valley Trailway Management Council.
- We are the Friends of the Betsie Valley Trail, a qualified charitable organization, providing financial, promotional, and volunteer labor/supervisory support for the Trail.
- No local tax dollars are used to support the Trail. The Friends are totally dependent on donations, grants, and the fantastic efforts of our valued volunteers.
Crystal Avenue Trail Renewal Project a GO for Spring!

It’s been nearly a year since the Friends received approval of a $150,000 grant by the Michigan DNR for reconstruction of the segment of trail from Beulah along 1.5 miles of Crystal Lake. We planned to perform the work this past season, but unfortunately, the shutdown forced the postponement of the project.

Good news is the Friends have raised the required $50,000 matching funds, the project recently received all the required approvals and will be going out for bids in the near future. The plan is to begin the work in the spring, with the goal of completing the new section of the Trail before mid-summer.

We’re planning a better-than-ever BVT in the coming years...

Beulah to Thompsonville Resurfacing — This 13-mile segment of the Trail has never been as popular as it could be. Currently it’s really only appropriate for mountain bikes. There is a desire to upgrade the Trail surface and improve the trailhead facilities in Thompsonville.

Crystal Mountain Spur & Beyond — Improvement of the Trail to Thompsonville would open up a number of wonderful connection opportunities. Planning has started for the possible creation of a year-round spur connecting directly to Crystal Mountain Resort. There is also great interest in extending the Trail from Thompsonville into Manistee County toward both Cadillac and Manistee.

A special thanks goes out to our friends at Stormcloud who donated a large portion of their patronage on Saturday, June 20th.

We are most appreciative of the partnerships we have with area businesses. We wish it would have been possible to host other events together this past year.

To renew or become a new official Business Sponsor of the Trail, please go to our website or use the enclosed membership reply envelope.
Trail Crew Keeps the BVT Safe & Beautiful

With calls for work crews significantly curtailed this year due to COVID concerns, work this season was performed primarily by a few of our long-time, dedicated volunteers.

All season long, Bill Skaff and others have removed dozens of downed trees. Julie and Dave Brewer have kept the bench areas tidy and trail map boxes stocked.

New signs were installed to help guide folks around the flooded area at Betsie Bay and to warn Trail users of poison ivy. A new bench was installed by the River Road parking area (see photo) and repairs were made to the viewing platform overlooking the Betsie River marsh.

We’re also most grateful to many Trail users and neighbors who spent countless hours picking up litter, mowing edges, trimming, and reporting things that needed attention. And a shout-out to the Cottage Pros who donated their snow plowing services.

At the heart of our mission is the successful operation of the Trail and we could not achieve this mission year-after-year without the help of our volunteers. Please consider joining our Trail Crew today: betsievalleytrail.org/HELP

Why volunteer? We asked...

“I’m so grateful for this gift we have in our community. I’m interested in helping to care for the trail to ensure its long-term sustainability.”

“I’ve been riding the trail since its inception. Recently retired. Now I have time to help.”

“I live close to the trail and use it several times a week. I am always picking up debris, so I decided to make it official!”

“I recently relocated to the area and make use of the trail on a regular basis. I see the importance of the trail to locals and visitors alike and wish to be a part of continuing the mission of the trail.”

“Travelled to the area for over a decade and enjoy the trail every time we are on it.”

Join the Friends New Staff!

Turning all the exciting plans we have for the Trail into reality is going to require some talented folks to lend a hand.

We have strategic goals we’d like to continue to work toward over the next several months. That’s why we’re building our team now. We’re working 100% remotely during this off-season.

Our highest priority is on fundraising efforts, including donor development, grant research and grant writing. In our marketing and communications area, we need volunteers to plan and run events. We’re also offering two internship opportunities for area students 16 years-of-age and older.

Learn more about each of our staff roles on our website here: betsievalleytrail.org/HELP
Greetings!

I’m happy to report our Trail has been a source of recreation, exercise and a refuge for many of us through a year during which we’ve had to sacrifice so much.

I encourage you to support the continued operation of the Trail by volunteering your time and becoming a 2021 member.

Our long-term plans are robust and the future is very bright, but we simply can’t achieve our goals without your help. I look forward to hearing from you.

— Jed Maker, Board President
Friends of the Betsie Valley Trail

BetsieValleyTrail.org  Follow us: Facebook.com/betsievalleytrail

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