Friends Provide Trail Improvements

Delays and state spending freezes forced the postponement of the resurfacing project along Crystal Avenue, but thanks to the hard work of several Friends and the Trailway Management Council, the project was completed just prior to the Memorial Day weekend.

Local contractor, Aj Zirkel of Aj’s Excavating, was awarded the contract. “We were pretty excited to get the contract,” commented Zirkel, “As a Benzie County native, it’s close to home for us, and we like to see folks enjoying the trail—especially this part along Crystal Lake.”

The project was made possible by a $150,000 DNR Recreational Passport grant and an additional $50,000 in matching funds raised by the Friends.

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.

Resurfacing Not Without Longevity Concerns

The stretch of the BVT that runs along Crystal Avenue is under special use provisions. The Friends worked with the Crystal Lake Property Rights Association (CLPRA) to help ensure the reconstruction project ran smoothly.

Both the Friends and CLPRA hope the newly resurfaced trail will last for years. However, the compacted limestone requires special care and is susceptible to damage. Protecting the new surface will require good trail stewardship by residents and trail users alike. Here are some best practices:

- Add ‘edging’ (sod, metal, plastic, or concrete) to help keep sand, etc. off trail surface
- Rake smooth and tamp down roughed-up areas
- Report washouts to Trail Care Coordinator at bvtcare@gmail.com
- No parking at any time on the trail (will be enforced and fines levied)
- Do not plow snow onto or across the trail
Enhancing Safety at M-115 Intersection

We are always looking to enhance the safety and enjoyment of the Trail for all. MDOT has evaluated the signage along M-115 where the route intersects the Trail and found them to be adequate, but the Friends felt we could do a bit more to get the attention of Trail users as they approach the intersection.

The Friends were fortunate to be awarded $1,565 from the Rebecca M. MacKay Endowment earmarked specifically for this safety improvement project. We then moved forward with a small fundraising campaign and the response from the community was tremendous.

Top dollar donors included: Two anonymous donors provided $1,500 in matching funds. Bob and Kris McLain of McLain Cycle & Fitness in Traverse City ($1,500), Joseph & Anne Purpura Endowment ($1,000), Paul & Laurine Madison ($500), Michele Ferenchick & Craig Sharp ($300), and Bill & Carin Northway, Ed Scott, Tom & Laura Trudeau (each donated $250). A big THANK YOU to all who donated to this project!

Trail Care Coordinator, Charlie Gregory, has narrowed his search for an appropriate solution and in the coming days, Friends volunteers will be installing solar powered, flashing stop signs on each side of the Trail as it approaches M-115.

Trail Rules and Signs Not as Important as Common Sense & Courtesy

The Friends certainly recognize the important of informative signage. At the same time, we feel it’s important not to look to increased signage as the answer to promote appropriate trail use. We hope trail users will use common sense and be courteous when they are on the Trail.

“Signs, signs everywhere a sign!”, exclaimed Trail Care Coordinator, Charlie Gregory. “When it comes to trail etiquette, there is no substitute for using one’s good judgement and maintaining the mindset of sharing the Trail and being mindful of others.”

“We can breathe a sigh of relief that the detour signs put up last summer due to flooding have been removed,” he continued. “A review of signage is underway to better address concerns of residents along the Trail as well as to provide a safe, fun, and unobtrusive experience for the users.”

“We also want to remind users, there are special use provisions for the segment of the BVT between Beulah and Mollineaux. The trail narrows with private property bordering either side of the Trail, there are no dogs allowed, and speeds must be kept under 10 MPH.”

“For the entire Trail, no motorized vehicles are allowed. Only Class 1 e-bikes are permitted. Speeds for all riders are to be kept under 15 MPH. Please be respectful and announce your presence as you pass by people.”
Local Triathlete to Represent BVT in IRONMAN

Last April when Traverse City Tourism offered the Friends the opportunity to enter an athlete in this September’s IRONMAN 70.3 Michigan, we immediately thought of our local standout Frederik Stig-Nielsen. Afterall, Frederik has dominated three Tri Up North events.

We were thrilled when Frederik accepted! His representation of the Friends of the Trail will be promoted by Traverse City Tourism as just one of a handful of entrants who are competing to raise funds for a local non-profit.

“I’ve always wanted to do an IRONMAN competition and I couldn’t miss the opportunity to do it here in our back yard” beamed Frederick. “I use the Betsie Valley Trail at least once, sometimes twice a day year-round, so when I was asked to represent the Trail and help raise money for the Friends, I was elated.”

To donate go to: betsievalleytrail.org/ironman And watch for a full bio and video interview with Frederik in our website blog next month!

Meet our New Trail Care & Volunteer Coordinator!

The Friends were quite pleased over the winter to have two folks step up and volunteer for a couple of our most important roles. Charlie Gregory has been serving as Trail Care Coordinator and Avace Wildie as our new Volunteer Coordinator.

Charlie has been working with our Trail Crew volunteers to keep the Trail clean and beautiful. He’s no stranger to the Trail, having used it for many years. Not surprising since Charlie is an avid biker, having logged over 2,500 miles last year!

“I was happy to take on the role,” commented Charlie, “It’s a big responsibility, but I’ve been quite impressed with the enthusiasm of our Trail Crew who are always eager to help.”

Assisting Charlie with volunteer on-boarding and coordination is Avace Wildie. We established the role of Volunteer Coordinator after realizing the TCC role was too big for just one volunteer and we’re so happy to have Avace!

“Cherished memories and trail adventures happen because of the amazing Trail Crew volunteers who maintain our trail so that we all can ride along and enjoy the experience,” exclaimed Avace. “I’ve enjoyed getting to know our group of volunteers. We have several projects planned for this summer and we can always use more help. If interested, I encourage you to go to our website and sign up as a volunteer or reach out to me directly at volcoordinator@betsievalleytrail.org.”

Friends Annual Members’ Meeting

2 P.M. July 13th at Cabbage Shed
Learn about the latest plans for your Trail!
Greetings!

“The arrival of summer welcomes numerous fans of the North and along with it, fans of the BVT. Many of us have already been regulars on the Trail during our unseasonably warm spring, and we watched with great anticipation as the segment from Beulah to County Farm Rd had its facelift. It’s a vast improvement.”

“We ask that all riders and residents along the Trail strive to keep it pristine, follow the special rules for this segment, limit use to bikes and pedestrians, stay on the Trail, and off the newly planted shoulders and bordering private property. This is a fragile area that requires the utmost care. We are grateful for the funds and many hours of volunteer effort to improve it and hope you enjoy it for many years!”

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

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