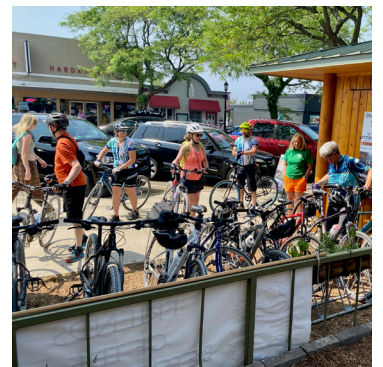


BETSIE VALLEY TRAILBLAZER

SUMMER 2023 NEWSLETTER



First Brew-to-Brew Fundraiser Big Hit!

BY JIM GRIBBLE

Last summer, I heard someone say it was smart to put a brewery on either end of the Trail and it got me thinking. We should do something to celebrate that! That's where the idea of having the first Brew-to-Brew Trail Day got started.

With the generous participation of Stormcloud Brewing Company in Frankfort and Five Shores Brewery in Beulah, participants who donated \$25 or more received vouchers for a beer at each location. After publicizing the event

and getting a modest number of pre-registrants, the event was held on June 24th.

The turnout was tremendous — 130 participants enjoyed a beautiful day on the Trail. The feedback we received was overwhelmingly positive and consequently, we're already starting to plan next year's Brew-to-Brew! Thank you to all those who helped run the event and all those who supported the Trail with their donations.

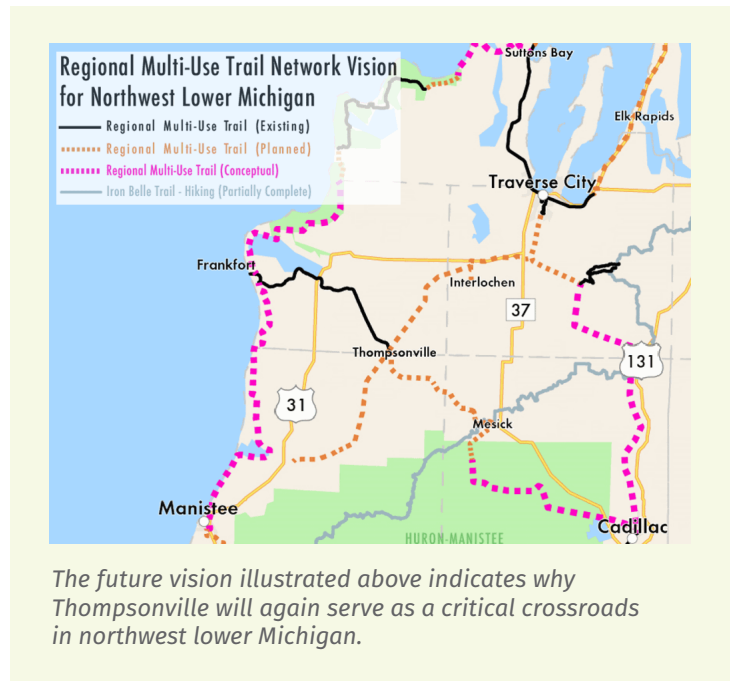
Beulah to Thompsonville Project Now Three Phases BY JED MAKER

The Friends are working to increase Trail usage by expanding the accessibility of the 12-mile segment from Beulah to Thompsonville. This segment of the Trail has always been the most rustic and the least accessible to all but the hardest mountain bikers. As a result, the Trail's promised connection to Thompsonville and points beyond has yet to be fully realized. It's a beautiful part of the Trail that, unfortunately, few of us have had the opportunity to enjoy.

Successful completion of this project will also recapture the importance of Thompsonville as a crossroads – in the past for rail and in the future for non-motorized transportation. New and existing rails-to-trails networks will someday take users northeast to Interlochen, southeast to Mesick/Cadillac, and southwest to Manistee/Ludington – eventually connecting entire lower Michigan. (see vision map).

The Friends have been working for over a year to secure funding for this massive project. We're pleased to be working now with Benzie County government as our applicant for large state and federal grants. In order to put ourselves in the most advantageous position to compete for these funds, we have divided the project into three phases.

Phase 1 paves the segment from the trailhead Depot in Beulah to Case Road. We hope this phase will be funded by a Spark grant through the DNR. Phase 2 will fix culverts



that run under the old railroad bed that are either nonfunctional or inhospitable to wildlife passage. Fixing culverts will restore 10 acres of wetland for fish, mammal, reptile, and insect habitat. Doing so will help us establish a favorable profile to win a major Federal RAISE grant for Phase 3 which will allow us to pave the rest of the way, from Case Rd to Thompsonville. Fixing the culverts before paving is desirable as opposed to tearing up new pavement to fix the culverts after the fact.

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Friends Add New Board Members

We're thrilled to announce that Heather Hudson and Heidi Bolger were recently voted onto the Friends Board.

Heather has been a part-time Beulah resident for her entire life which is why she loves Cherry Hut cherry pie! She also enjoys biking, running, and walking on the Trail. Over the past year, her skills as a lawyer have greatly benefited various efforts by the Friends. "Running and walking the Trail between Beulah and Thompsonville kept me sane during COVID," commented Heather, "I hope to make meaningful contributions to the long-term growth of the Trail which



Heather Hudson



Heidi Bolger

I believe is one of the area's finest assets."

As many of you know, Heidi is one of the owners of Iron Fish Distillery. Her involvement with trails spans 20-plus years in her leadership positions with the Great Lakes Bay Regional Trails Board where she focused on linking trails in Saginaw, Bay, and Midland counties. She commented, "I'm excited about being part of the Betsie Valley Trail and working with the talented Friends team to further the development, access, and maintenance of the beautiful trails in this region that I now call home."

We're Raising Funds to Pay for our New Trail Workhorse!

"Having a piece of equipment like this is a HUGE game-changer for the Trail Crew!" beamed BVT Trail Care Coordinator, Charlie Gregory. "We've been using personal vehicles on the Trail for towing our various pieces of equipment which is FAR from ideal."

"With a Gator vehicle, we can tow our equipment like our power blower, offset mower, and trailer," he continued. "Personal vehicles pretty much block the Trail, while the Gator is narrower and allows Trail users to easily pass. We typically experience about 100 felled trees that block the Trail each year. The Gator has towing capability on the front and back, so we'll be able to attach a chain and drag logs off the Trail. This is going to be a huge time-saver – not to mention MUCH easier on our backs!"

"The Gator bed is nice and large. We can fill it with our tools (chainsaw, clippers, shovel, tamper, etc.) or haul loads of dirt, sand, rocks, gravel, and base material," according to Gregory, "And the bed has hydraulic dumping capability!"



Trail Care Coordinator, Charlie Gregory, takes the John Deere Gator for a test drive.

The Friends have been looking to add this asset to our trail care capability for several years. The addition of our River Road Storage Facility last year gave us the space we needed to store the Gator and now we need to pay for it. This awesome piece of equipment comes with a hefty price tag – nearly \$23,000. **Please consider donating today to the Gator fund! Simply use the remit envelope provided and indicate that you'd like your donation to go towards our Operating Account.**

Did You Know?

- ❖ 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.

Volunteers Keep the Trail Beautiful & Accessible for All



Trail Crew volunteers repair a portion of the Trail along Crystal Lake

We rely on our wonderful volunteers to keep the Trail clean and beautiful for all to enjoy. They often work on their own, using their own tools. We have volunteers who contribute in many other ways as well.

Please consider joining the team – we'd love to have you! Learn more here:

betsievalleytrail.org/help



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Beulah to Thompsonville Project *Continued* ⇨

Meanwhile our everyday needs will be met with the purchase of a new Gator, which will help greatly with maintenance work. This piece of equipment is a real game-changer for our all-volunteer Trail Crew and we need your contributions to help us pay for it. We welcome your donations earmarked for **Operations**. These funds will go directly to paying for this vehicle. As always, your

support is helping us achieve our long-term vision for the Betsie Valley Trail and we greatly appreciate you!



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



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