

# BETSIE VALLEY TRAILBLAZER

FALL / WINTER 2023 NEWSLETTER



## Friends Receive \$400,000 Grant to Kickstart Trail Paving Project!

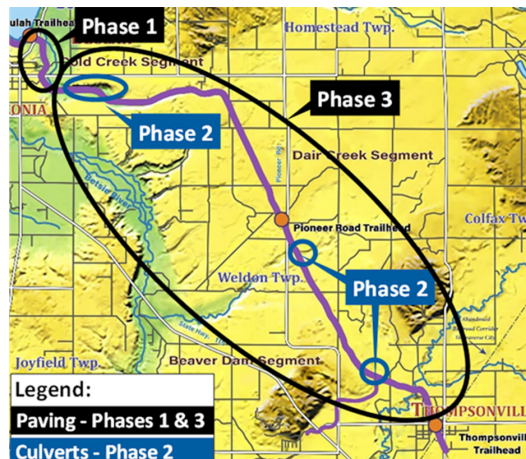
The Friends were excited to receive the news in October that our second try for a Michigan Spark Grant funded by American Rescue Plan Act was approved by the Michigan DNR.

“We’re quite happy with the news of the grant,” said Jim Gribble, Director of Marketing and Public Relations for the Friends. “It will allow us to get started paving from Beulah to Thompsonville and we’re confident that improvement made in these first phases will build some momentum for the remainder of the project.”

The \$400,000 will cover the cost of the first phase of the 12-mile paving project, paving one mile of Trail south of Beulah to Case Road. As described in the summer newsletter, the second phase involves replacing culverts from Case Road to Haze Road and is expected to cost approximately \$1 million.

The third phase of the project is paving the remaining 11 miles of trail from Case Road to Thompsonville, at a cost of \$3 million. We are seeking other grants and funding sources for the project. Improving the trail and the environment around it with each phase could open the door for other grant awards.

The Thompsonville Area Restoration Project was recently awarded \$346,000 to build a new rail-themed park and trailhead in the village. “The TARP project and others will once again make Thompsonville a center of activity and important crossroads for nonmotorized traffic,” Gribble continued. “Making the Trail more accessible and usable for everyone is an important step in making this regional project a success.”



*The paving of the Trail will begin at the Beulah trailhead.*





## Member Meeting Vote Results in New Non-Profit Designation

In September, about 75 members and guests gathered at the Stormcloud Taproom for a special member meeting. The purpose of the meeting was to conduct a vote to change the Friends non-profit corporate designation from a member organization to a directorship.

“Last summer, we were looking into updating our by-laws and discovered that it had been literally decades since they had been reviewed,” commented Jed Maker, Friends Board President. “With the help of some outside counsel, we learned that in order for us to continue to run our non-profit in the most efficient way, we would need to change to a directorship, and to make that happen, we would need to have a vote of our members.”

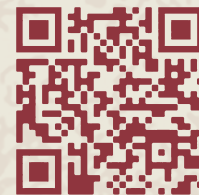
Consequently, the Friends organized a nice reception and presided over an official member meeting where members heard from Jed and Heather Hudson, new Board Member and retired attorney. The change was fully discussed and then voted on, passing overwhelmingly.

The Friends are now a directorship organization and can make decisions, including updates to our by-laws, with a vote of the Board of Directors. As always, we will continue to invite members and the general public to our annual meeting in July. Anyone can submit comments or questions to us anytime by emailing [info@betsievalleytrail.org](mailto:info@betsievalleytrail.org). We greatly value the input received from our members and the general public.

**Please help us achieve our Vision:**

A World-class Trail  
in Benzie County  
Connects Healthy and  
Active Communities.

**We depend on your support!**



**[betsievalleytrail.org/donate](https://betsievalleytrail.org/donate)**



A few of the many Friends volunteers who were up early to help at the Ironman.

## Safety Along the Betsie Valley Trail



Along with our commitment to expand the accessibility of the Trail, the Friends prioritizes the safety of all those who use the Trail. We believe that safety is strongly linked to COURTESY.

We hope to increase users enjoyment of the Trail and that starts with the understanding that the Trail is for all to use. This means the person walking their dog (with a leash and under control) has the same right to use the Trail as a family on bikes.

This is why it's critical to share the Trail and be kind and courteous. When safely passing, announce yourself as you approach with your voice or a bell. Please obey posted speed limits and be aware that only pedal-assist, Class 1 e-bikes are permitted on the Trail. If you see serious violations of these and other posted rules, you can call or text the DNR RAP line 24/7 at 800-292-7800.

## Join the Team!



We rely on our wonderful volunteers to keep the trail clean and safe. We have volunteers who contribute in many other ways as well. Please consider helping out – we'd love to have you on the team! Learn more here:

[betsievalleytrail.org/help](https://betsievalleytrail.org/help)

## Volunteers Do it All to Support the Trail!



For the third straight year, Friends volunteers played an important role ensuring the successful running of this fall's Ironman 70.3 Michigan. As a result, the Friends earned a donation of \$2,600 from the Ironman Foundation. This included other volunteers from the Cherry Capital Cycle Club and the Stormriders who generously supported the Friends. Also for the third time, the Ann Arbor Tri Club and Stormcloud Brewing donated \$900 and \$700 respectively in conjunction with their Underpants Fun Run held the Friday evening before Ironman.



Jed Maker received an original piece of fiber art as a small thank you for his 6 years of volunteer service to the Trail as Board President.



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## Membership Renewal Form Enclosed Please Return Today!

Dear Friends of the Betsie Valley Trail,

What an honor and privilege to be selected to serve as the President of the Friends! It's an exciting time with the awarding of major funding to begin transforming the Trail from Beulah to Thompsonville. In the coming years, we'll see a new rail-themed park at the trailhead in Thompsonville and other trail systems converging there. It's thrilling to see us moving closer to connecting our communities with safe routes that provide healthy outlets for enjoying our abundantly beautiful region.

Your financial support has and continues to be critical to achieving our Vision. We hope you will prioritize

donating to our organization as you contemplate year-end giving. Our board is so grateful for the trust you place in us as we develop, promote and maintain the BVT. Wishing you a wonderful season of Holidays ahead!



*Heidi*

–Heidi Bolger, Board President  
Friends of the Betsie Valley Trail



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