



BETSIE VALLEY TRAILBLAZER

– SUMMER 2025 NEWSLETTER –



Proud participants in the ribbon cutting included members of the Friends, Benzie County government and the DNR.

Friends Celebrate “First Mile” of Paving to Thompsonville

Over 50 people attended the Friends ribbon cutting ceremony in early June marking the completion of the first mile of paving from Beulah to Thompsonville.

The joyful occasion recognized those who made this accomplishment possible, including the Michigan Department of Natural Resources who awarded a \$400,000 Spark Grant to Benzie County government and the Betsie Valley Trailway Management Council who oversaw the project, Gourdie-Fraser, Inc. who did the engineering, and Team Elmers who performed the work.

“You’ve been watching this evolution for a long time,” said Heidi Bolger, president of the Friends. “This is mile one, and we’re hoping it is mile one of 12.”

The next steps are already in the works...

The Friends partnered with the Benzie County Road Commission and have applied for a Michigan Department of Transportation Alternatives Program (TAP) grant, requesting funds to pave a 6.3-mile segment of the trail from Case Road to Pioneer Road. The total cost of the project is estimated to be \$2.5 million. If awarded this grant, the Friends will need to contribute in the range of \$500,000 in matching funds. Our plan is to seek other grants and use funds from our donations to make this project possible.

The Friends are also working with the Village of Thompsonville as the applicant for a DNR Trust Fund grant to pave a little less than a one-mile section of the trail from Thompson Avenue in Thompsonville to the former train trestle bridge over the Betsie River. The total project

continued ⇨

“First Mile” continued

cost is \$404,000. The grant request is for \$299,000 and the Friends will need to contribute approximately \$105,000.

Making the trail to Thompsonville more accessible is a critical step in once-again establishing Thompsonville as a transportation hub, in the past for rail and in the future for non-motorized transportation. In addition to the new village park and campground being created by the Thompsonville Area Revitalization Project, it is expected future regional trail connections NE from Interlochen, SE from Cadillac, and SW from Manistee will all meet in Thompsonville.



Drone image of 'First Mile' out of the beautiful Village of Beulah. Image courtesy of Gourdie-Fraser, Inc.

Please consider a donation to the Friends to help us make this important long-term project a reality!



In April, the Betsie Valley Trail was awarded the distinction of becoming a Pure Michigan Trail at the Governor's Conference on Tourism

Friends Planning Meeting Sets Short- and Long-term Priorities

At the end of May, the Friends gathered for our annual planning meeting. We reviewed progress on the priorities we established in our 2024 planning session which included the funding and implementation of two major projects that replaced several sections the asphalt trail between Frankfort and Elberta and the widening and resurfacing of several sections of the limestone section along Crystal Lake. The cost of these trail maintenance projects totaled \$80,000.

Attendees help set the agenda by providing their input via a pre-session survey, identifying opportunities and areas for attention. The discussion resulted in the following priorities through 2027:

- ◇ Pave Case Road to Thompsonville – Clear plan and seek/align funding

- ◇ Elberta Beach Trail – Lend support and assistance fully to the GTRLC
- ◇ Assess, plan, and implement our annual commitment level for trail maintenance
- ◇ Evaluate best location option for accessibility project, seek funding, and complete project
- ◇ Develop a courtesy campaign and wayfinding signage to enhance trail user experience and safety
- ◇ Pursue enhancing and further development of Beulah trailhead building

The Friends are proud of our work as stewards of the trail and recognize the challenges related to making our priorities a reality. We welcome the support and input from the community.

Friends Looking to Make Beulah Trailhead Building an Attraction

The Friends are working now to refresh and upgrade the Beulah Trailhead and Visitor Center and are actively discussing possibilities with the Village of Beulah and the Betsie Valley Trailway Management Council (BVTMC) in order to work together on a shared vision.

The building is located in the very center of Beulah and is also a midpoint along the 22-mile trail. The Friends are enthused to partner with the local community to create a sense of place and enhance the development of this local attraction for both the village and the trail. We have several ideas to enhance the building and create a destination to benefit all parties involved. The Friends are planning to pay for this project and will soon be determining the scope and associated costs.



Save the Date!

Sunday, September 21st

More info to follow!



Meet Julie Luginbill our New Volunteer Coordinator

I'm excited to join the team! My husband, Jim, and I utilize the trail daily when we're at our cottage in Beulah and have been excited to see the many events and offerings grow throughout the years. Recently retired from a career in Healthcare and Volunteer Management, I look forward to meeting and working with our fantastic volunteers who are vital to our continued success. Please consider sharing your time and talents—no gift of time and effort is too small. We need volunteers to represent the Friends at both the Beulah Art Fair on July 5th and the Frankfort on August 15th and 16th. Please go here to sign up betsievalleytrail.org/volunteer or contact me at volunteerbvt@gmail.com to learn more about the many ways in which you can help. I look forward to hearing from you!



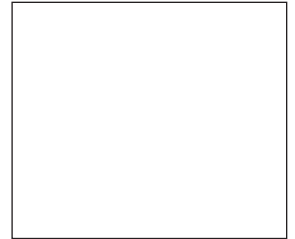
Julie pictured out with other trail crew volunteers clearing the trail between Beulah and Thompsonville. A big THANK YOU to all the volunteers who helped on trail clean-up days!





P.O. Box 474
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Change Service Requested



Renew Your Support for the Friends Today!

Dear Friends of the Betsie Valley Trail,

What a year it's been for accomplishments! Multiple sections of the trail resurfaced last fall, our new one mile of paved surface out of Beulah, the submission of major grant applications to further our paving project, a fruitful planning meeting that's helped us to establish key priorities moving forward, and much more!

Make a Quick & Easy Donation with Venmo!



We've set an ambitious course and we need your support, financial and otherwise, to realize our ultimate vision of a world-class trail in Benzie County

that connects healthy and active communities. Many are not aware that no local tax dollars have ever gone towards supporting and expanding the trail. We depend on the generosity of our local community to help keep this Benzie County jewel safe, beautiful, and accessible for all to enjoy. Please consider a donation of any size. Your support is greatly appreciated!

My best wishes for a summer filled with fun,



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



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