

BETSIE VALLEY TRAILBLAZER

BETSIE
VALLEY
TRAIL



Public Input Desired for Future ‘Beach-to-Beach Trail’ *By Kevin Dombkowski*

Planning is now underway for the design and development of the long-awaited Elberta Beach-to-Beach segment of the Betsie Valley Trail, which will run along Betsie Bay to

Lake Michigan. This exciting project is part of a broader effort to revitalize Elberta’s historic waterfront through a partnership among the Village of *continued on page 2* ➡

New Paving From Thompsonville Next Spring

Next spring, the Friends plan to pave approximately one mile from the new trailhead park in Thompsonville to the Betsie River train trestle bridge. Plans to complete the segment this year were delayed due to the drawn-out state budget process. The Trust Fund grant award for this project had been recommended last November.

We have conditional approval of a Michigan DOT Transportation Alternatives Program (TAP) grant and now we need to receive approval of another Trust Fund grant we have applied for that will help cover the significant matching funds required. This will fund the paving of the next 6.3 miles.

This year, we applied for another TAP grant that will also require matching funds from a Trust Fund grant. If all goes according to plan, the earliest we expect to complete the paving project is 2028.



In July, we toured the various project sites that are being significantly funded by Michigan DNR grants, including the new pavilion currently under construction in Thompsonville. Pictured at the building site left to right are Charamy Cleary – DNR’s Recreation Grant Coordinator, Chuck Kraus – President of TARP, and Heidi Bolger – President of the Friends.

Public Input Desired *continued*

Elberta, the Grand Traverse Regional Land Conservancy (GTRLC), and the Michigan State Land Bank Authority (SLBA). Artemis Development is taking the lead on gathering community priorities for this project, including the beach-to-beach trail.

As a part of this revitalization project, design features of the Elberta beach-to-beach trail will be guided by a community-led visioning process. Several community engagement activities including community survey webinars and focus groups will take place this summer, preceding the visioning process scheduled for September 22-24 at the Elberta Life Saving Station. The aim is to elicit key community perspectives on all aspects of the Elberta development, including the beach-to-beach trail. This input will help guide specific aspects of the beach-to-beach trail design elements, its routing through the Village, and its terminus at Elberta Beach.

The Friends will remain fully engaged in the beach-to-beach planning process with the Village of Elberta officials and the development team. Once completed, this segment of the BVT will give trail users direct access to the revitalized Elberta waterfront, the natural beauty of forested dune habitat, and the pristine Elberta Beach.



Work has begun on the new Crystal Lake Access Improvement Project, also known as the Outlet Project by the Benzie County Park & Rec members Shaun Johnson, Ed Hoogterp, and Charles Kraus who have been leading the project for the past several years. Although the project will make an alteration to the trail, the trail will continue to be open to users during the construction.

Brew-to-Brew was Most Successful Fundraiser Ever!



Check-in volunteers Bryce & Paula Dreeszen and Jed Maker in Beulah working hard to get riders on their way!

This year's Brew-to-Brew Trail Day was a huge success! The beautiful summer weather led to a record number of 190 participants and raised nearly \$14,000 that will support the work of the Friends.

The great turnout was a bit overwhelming for our volunteers as we did not expect nearly all the participants to check in at the Beulah location bright and early, including 30 same day sign-ups! Bryce and Paula Dreezen along with other volunteers worked feverishly to process everyone so they could get on the trail. Nearly everyone completed the full 20-mile loop between the breweries.

We're most grateful for the wonderful volunteers and business sponsors, including Stormcloud and Five Shores, as well as the additional donations provided by many of the participants. We're already planning for and looking forward to seeing everyone next year!

New Trail Care Coordinator is Filling Big Shoes!

Our new Trail Care Coordinator, Stephanie Kennedy, has been doing a wonderful job this summer and we're so grateful to have her at the helm. After retiring recently from a 40-year career as a Human Resources leader, Steph commented, "Taking this role has given me a chance to spend more time with the people I love as well as give back to the environment and communities I live in."

"My husband, Bob, and I," she continued, "bought a cottage on Crystal Lake in 2016. As avid cyclists, we've always loved the Betsie Valley Trail and its beauty meandering through the shores of the Betsie River and alongside beautiful Crystal Lake. It was an easy decision to take the reins from the amazing work and dedication of Charlie Gregory as Trail Care Coordinator."

"This work is really the work of a village. That village is our volunteers as well as community partners. The trail is nearly entirely maintained by volunteers. That includes keeping the trail clear of obstacles, clear of debris,

and maintaining as smooth of a surface as possible. Spring and Summer are busy, as we clean up the trail from the harsh northern winters, spring rains and surging plant growth. Volunteer work can be great exercise, purposeful and fun! It's a great way to get outside and meet other

members of our community, as well as take pride in the work while you're using the trail. **We need more trail crew members and I encourage you to learn more at:**

betsievalleytrail.org/trail-support



Volunteer Spotlight



Dan Ruffe (left) is one of our hardest working trail crew volunteers. He is out there clearing bush, overhanging branches, trimming, removing trees – often multiple times a week!

Bill Scaff (right) is our go-to tree removal volunteer and so much more! When we get a report of a tree blocking the trail, Bill gets out there, often on his bike that is equipped with a chain saw so he can be mobile all along the trail.



PRACTICE THE 3 C'S

✓ COURTESY

✓ CAUTION

✓ CONTROL



Keeping the Betsie Valley Trail safe and accessible for ALL!
betsievalleytrail.org



Focus on Trail Etiquette – A Culture of Kindness

We are dedicated to fostering a culture of kindness and courtesy on the Betsie Valley Trail. Watch for our new signs along the trail that encourage bikers to announce when passing others – "On Your Left." Our trail etiquette team and board members are on the trail now passing out "Caught Ya" cards to trail users who practice good trail etiquette. Cards are good for an ice cream or beer from our wonderful sponsors: Stormcloud, Five Shores, Pearly's Dairy King, and Kilwins Frankfort.



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Change Service Requested



**Renew Your Support
for the Friends Today!**

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Dear Friends of the Betsie Valley Trail,

I'm happy to share that this has been a very productive year for the Friends and for the Trail!

We continue to make great progress towards our goal of paving from Beulah to Thompsonville. The effort to make two major trailheads more accessible should become a reality next year. Our new trail care lead and trail care volunteers have done an excellent job of stewardship. We've launched initiatives to better engage the general public, trail users and supporters, and to foster a culture of kindness on the trail.

I'm thrilled to announce the addition of new Board members Stephanie Kennedy, Julie Tebo and Barb Wirtz. They bring a great combination of business and

community volunteer experience that will add even greater depth to our strong leadership team.

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. Please consider a donation of any size. Your support is greatly appreciated!

My best wishes for a summer and fall filled with fun,



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



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