



### THE PATH FINDER NEWSLETTER

Rails to Trails of Northwest Montana  
P.O. BOX 1103  
Kalispell, MT 5993-1103

Rails to Trails of NW Montana  
meets at 5:30 PM on the first  
Monday of each month at the  
Fish, Wildlife and Parks  
Conference Room  
490 N. Meridian Road, Kalispell

We're on the Web!  
[www.railstotrailsofnwmt.com/](http://www.railstotrailsofnwmt.com/)

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### THE PATH FINDER



### SPRING 2015



### President's Message

April 2015: Finally we are getting some spring weather. I notice a lot of people on the trail. This is good as the trails were meant for multi-use – bicyclists of all ages, dog walkers, joggers, track teams and mothers pushing strollers!

The volunteers are gearing up to work on some trail improvements this summer. First, the crew is organizing to have a contractor place asphalt around the benches and interpretive signs near Somers, eliminating the loose gravel which clutters the trail. At the same time a contractor has been selected to seal coat, crack fill and asphalt patching near the Smith Valley School.

Rails to Trails did not receive a grant from the Recreation Trails Program in 2014. Competition was tough. For 2015 we have applied for a \$33,500 grant from Recreation Trails and \$10,000 from FEC's Round up for Safety program. Our main use for these two grants will be to start to raise the level of the trail beyond the Kila School. This should prevent spring flooding on the trail.

As you know the highway construction on Highway 2 during 2014 was frustrating. It is almost completed as I have been told they want to be done by June 15.

As the City of Kalispell works on removing the rail line through town, we are hopeful the trail can be continued eastward and toward Columbia Falls. By then the trail from West Glacier to Columbia Falls should be completed. Connecting Somers, Kila, Kalispell, and Columbia Falls to Glacier National Park is a challenging dream and would be a wonderful accomplishment. Thanks for your support.

Richard Siderius, President

### End of the Line



There is a new structure at the Somers Trailhead!! The S-2 Engine is getting a new home. Still under construction but due to be completed by June. The Somers Company Town Project has built a shelter for the engine and will complete an interior area as a railroad museum. Take a ride to the south end of the trail, learn a little history of the area and see the S-2 in its new home.

### Tree Planting Project

In 2012 Rails-To-Trails of Northwest Montana began a two year project of planting trees along the stretch of the trail just east of Dern Road. Fifth graders from Peterson School, under the guidance of Dudley's Trees, Inc. and R-2-T volunteers, planted over 150 trees in the first half mile of that stretch of trail. In 2013 the next group of fifth graders completed the project extending the plantings for another half-mile with another 150 trees. In addition some plantings were done in the Kila and Somers Area.

The seedling trees planted in 2012 were aspen, chokecherry and conifers. Aspen seedlings were not planted in 2013 because their survival rate was relatively low.

No seedlings were planted in 2014. This was to give time to determine which seedlings survived. Later this spring (May or June 2015) all the seedling sites will be surveyed for surviving trees. We are hopeful that the survival rate of 66%, recorded in 2013, will still be accurate. Sites for replacement trees or additional trees will be identified for planting in the spring of 2016.

### Coming Events on the Great Northern Trail

**May 1** - Arbor Day Tree Planting with Kila School Kids in Kila. Peterson School Kids will plant trees in Somers. Call Somers and Kila schools for more info.

**May 9** - Somers Community Town Project, S-2 engine shelter fund raiser. 9 AM, Saturday. Family fun run from Somers Trail Head to HWY 82

**May 15** - HIKE, BIKE, AND ROLL PARADE  
Rails to Trails family fun ride and fundraiser.  
Friday 5:30 to 6:30 PM.  
Meridian Trail Head.  
Decorate bikes, costumes, noise makers. Come join the fun.

**May 30** - Peterson School 5K

**August 29** - Cancer Awareness ride from Kila to Kalispell.

**Nov.7** - Rails to Trails Annual Fund Raiser Country Dance and Pie Auction  
7:00 - 10:00 PM @  
Smith Valley Grange  
Watch for flyers and posters this fall. This is a family fun event for all ages

## Hike, Bike, and Roll Parade

*Fundraiser for Maintenance on the  
Great Northern Rails to Trails*  
Meridian Road

Decorations, costumes, noise makers, signs, are encouraged. All ages welcome. Snacks available for purchase. You are encouraged to bring your own water.

There will be little prizes.

*COST \$5 per person or \$15 per family of 4 or more (under 2 free)*

**Friday, May 15<sup>th</sup>** from 5:30-6:30  
Rain or Shine

R.S.V.P. appreciated 249-2497

## Volunteer of the year 2015 - HELEN PILLING

For years I have lived on the outskirts of the Rails to Trails volunteer group. One of the most fascinating characters of this bunch of do-gooders is a gal named Helen. She doesn't need the cheerleader outfit or pom-poms to rally a crowd, or to lighten the hearts and spirits of the trail building enthusiasts over the many miles and obstacles of constructing a beautiful and wonderful family trail. I have watched and admired her as she has humbly led many of the volunteers with laughter and love to incredible success. I'll leave it at that. She is Helen and she has a beautiful roar and has given us a beautiful trail to follow!

By Larry Parsons



Working the Kila trail.

### Meet Helen



Backcountry skiing.



Calling dances at the Pie Auction.



Hosting a R2T meeting.



Christmas party at the bowling alley.

Meet Helen Pilling. She has been an active volunteer with us for over 25 years! Her enthusiasm, creativity, and playful spark is an integral part of our group. Not only does she provide us with yummy treats, amazing music, and solid service, primarily on the Great Northern Historical Trail- a 22 mile one way trail connecting Somers to Kila, but she embodies the goals of our group by avidly riding that trail with her children Quincy and Galen, for whom she initially became passionate about providing a safe and fun trail for them to ride. Her partner Dan'l has been right there every step of the way and we appreciate him too!

Helen is an important member of our group. She contributes to many local organizations, including leading bike tours with Adventure Cycling, organizing the Bear Hug Mountain Music and Dance Festival, volunteering and supporting the Kila School, and more Kila adventures like Earth Day, clean up, and the Kila Country Festival. You may recognize her as a member of the Montana Marimba Ensemble, the Grin and Bear It String Clan, and Irish Jams. Her current hobbies are learning the ukelele, mastering backcountry skiing, and being one of the best darn hoola-hoopers around!

We'd like to recognize her for her presence in our group, whether it is her creative costumes, her positive and creative attitude and contributions, and that she is always willing to lend a hand or lift a spirit by helping others walk through life. Her smile and beautiful personality radiate a sense of comfort available for all to see and share. Thank you Helen!!

By Valerie Parsons

## Along the Trail

Being involved in trail maintenance mainly between Somers and Hwy 82, I have come upon many interesting incidents. For this article I would like to cover a couple of horse incidents. While "NO HORSES ALLOWED" signs are posted, they still show up once in a while and I try to relay the dangers involved, diplomatically.

A couple of years ago a woman rider and her dog, sitting in a carrier on a pack horse, came upon me. A few days later, the Daily Interlake pictured her and her pack string on the front page. They were on a 6 month horseback ride across the country.

Then there was the rider from outside Kalispell taking this trail section as a short cut to Del's bar in Somers. He was quite upset when told the trail was not for horses. I felt he got the message but since he was built like a linebacker for the Seattle Seahawks, I thought I best not expand on the subject. I diplomatically encouraged him to continue and return another way.

And of course, being mister nice guy got me some out of the ordinary smelly maintenance work. Two women riders came by claiming not to have seen the signs so I again explained the dangers and suggested this not occur again. To my surprise, the next day, I saw their sign of appreciation, several large piles of horse manure in the middle of the trail.

I have met many interesting and friendly people while working on the trail. Being a member of Rails to Trails of Northwest Montana and volunteering over the years has been a great pleasure, especially seeing so many of our community using and enjoying the trail. See you along the trail.

Bob Klein



A family outing on the trail



Somers Middle school Track/CC team training run.

## Rails to Trails 2015 Finance Summary

### TREASURER'S REPORT

Rails to Trails funds have increased over recent years due to successful applications for grants, general donations and our fundraisers.

General Fund	\$48,219.
DADavidson	\$ 2,674.
WhitefishCU	\$17,471.
	<u>\$68,364.</u>

Each year volunteers perform many hours of service and hundreds of dollars of time and supplies are often donated to maintain and manage the Great Northern Historical Trail. We sincerely want to thank every individual, organization, business and agency for continuing to support Rails to Trails. Your donations help us to continue to expand and maintain the trails.

Take a minute to look over our gift walls located in Kila, Kalispell (2 locations) and Somers.