



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/

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THE PATH FINDER



SPRING 2016



President's Message

Dear Trailblazers,

Shortly after being elected President this winter, I came into possession of the deep archives of this group. As I looked through boxes of files and archives of this organization since its inception, I'm reminded that the seeds for the Great Northern Historical Trail (GN Trail) we enjoy today were first planted in 1989 when a committed group called a meeting proposing a rail trail from Kalispell to Marion. Over the years this project has enjoyed wide support throughout the community, though it did not come quickly. In the early 1990s, an isolated railroad right-of-way west of Kalispell was acquired by Flathead County Parks & Recreation Department. From there, the Trail grew to Kalispell, then Kila and Lakeside. Its success prompted other groups to organize efforts in their neighborhoods and bike trails are now enjoyed throughout the Valley. Rails to Trails has much to be proud of. Not only have we succeeded in building a world-class amenity, we are committed to the challenge of maintaining the miles of pavement on the ground. But there is much to do. Great things are happening in both Kalispell and the Canyon in the months ahead for trails. We should use that momentum to help link the communities of the Valley together with a bike trail.



I'm honored to be President of this organization and recognize that so much effort has been made over the last 27 years to bring us to this point. With that in mind, and the strong support of those at recent meetings, our stated goal is to connect Flathead Lake and Glacier Park with a bicycle trail. Many efforts already have been made to complete pieces of this project. With the exciting work planned to take place throughout the Valley in the near future, now is a great time to work together to connect our valley with a bike trail.

As a recipient of our Newsletter, I want to personally thank you for your support. Know that your financial support of the Great Northern Trail is valued and important. Please help us continue to maintain and expand the Great Northern Trail. Send a contribution that suits your situation and please join us on the first Monday of each month at 5:30 pm at the FWP office on Meridian Road.

See you on the trail!

Mark Crowley
President, Rails to Trails of Northwest Montana

Kila Trail End

Lots of things are happening at both ends of our trail. If you don't have a full 10 miles in your legs you can park a number of different spots and head one way or the other. These spring days Smith Lake WPA is teeming with ducks, cranes, herons, raptures, and bicyclists, a worthy direction to go. Just beyond the Kila gift wall you may have noticed a sign and tables in a lovely large mowed area, perfect for romping.

The "Kila Community Park" is working hard to create a gathering spot, with a pavilion, historical signs, and birding scope. Unfortunately the trail, as it leads to the park, needs a lot of work. For a few years now we have been writing grants and gaining the funds needed to elevate the trail and level the frost heaves. We will be doing the work this summer, partnering forces and expertise with FVCC, Flathead Electric Co-op, and Fish Wildlife and Parks. Trail users may need to be patient and careful with trail obstruction.

Together with Rails to Trails of NW Montana the Kila Community Park will be planting trees, filling the gift wall, raising the trail and making the Kila end of the Great Northern Historical Trail a destination and a beginning to be proud of.
By Helen Pilling



"Make no little plans; they have no magic to stir men's blood and probably themselves will not be realized. Make big plans; aim high in hope and work, remembering that a noble, logical diagram once recorded will never die, but long after we are gone be a living thing, asserting itself with ever-growing insistency. Remember that our sons and our grandsons are going to do things that would stagger us. Let your watchword be order and your beacon beauty."

Daniel H. Burnham

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.



Volunteer of the year 2016 - Don Snow

Don Snow – Volunteer of the year, a lifetime... I wish I could hear Don tell that story one more time. He always had a tale to tell, making you feel special, personalizing his wisdom with whom he talked to. Don was a teacher and what he taught me was to be true to your cause.

Standing tall, looking over his life, he had no regrets, creating positive and reassuring stories. He considered his life, playing the double bass and advocating for bicycle trails, plenty of fun ‘for and old man’. Don and a few of his bicycling friends started our Rails to Trails of NW Montana way back in 1987. Coming from the Seattle area and having been a bicycle commuter most of his working life, Don knew what could be done and what needed to be done to build recreational trails. From planting flowers to asking for donations Don was always willing to work for our/ his cause. Fortunately for all us Don had an infectious personality. He convinced many that our dream of a network of trails connecting schools, commercial areas and parks, was their dream too. With Phyllis and their dogs they spent years of their lives on the trail smiling or chatting to everyone that passed them. When the two final bridges were built, completing the Great Northern Historical Trail (2009), his shout of joy still echoes around the Flathead Valley. Don Snow truly led this community down the path to miles of separated recreational trails.

With Don’s over flirtatious and always kind encouragement Rails to Trails has built and keeps maintaining the 22 miles of the Great Northern Historical Trail. When you spy a wild flower, a fascinating bird, or a splash of color along the trail that makes you smile, that would be Don Snow continuing to live in our hearts and along our trail.

By Helen Pilling



OUR GIFT WALLS WANT YOU

For \$75/brick or \$500/tile you can proudly show your support, advertise your business, and memorialize a loved one (2 or 4 legged). It is a fantastic forever way to help Rails to Trails of NW Montana. We will soon be able to take donations from our web site, www.railstotrailsofnwmt.com Check it out for upcoming events and like us on Facebook, we like to know you are out there enjoying the trails.



Weeds

East of Dern Road

Location of recent weed pull: From about 1/4 mile east of mile marker 2 (at the bend in the trail) to the east for about 1/2 mile. Early in April, a concerted effort to pull last summer’s new “tumbleweed” that is invading the trail. This weed has stiffer and larger stems than the more common, feathery and slender-stemmed tumbleweed. This new weed has been blown up against and through the south side of the fence on the south side of the trail. It appears that it could still have viable seeds. Seven large trash bags were filled with this new weed and taken to the dump.

Other weeds will be pulled as time allows. The section of the trail, from the parking area just east of Dern road for slightly over a mile to the east is continually watched for hound’s tongue, mullein, and thistles.

Another plant that is a pest along a short stretch of the trail is horsetail. Horsetail requires chemical applications to control it. That work has to be done by people who are professionally trained in using strong chemicals to eradicate stubborn weeds.

Feel free to help pull weeds along the trail.

By Phyllis Snow

Along the Trail

While attending to trail maintenance between Hwy 82 and Somers Trail head, I have been somewhat surprised at the number of trail users who have very little knowledge of how much time and effort goes into routine maintenance of the trail. Many times, while working on the trail, I am questioned or receive compliments about trail maintenance. This gives me a chance to speak a little about the work of our volunteers behind the scenes. I want to review some of the maintenance activities required on the trail:

- Continuous removal of trash, brush, fallen branches, fallen rocks and animal waste.
- Weekly emptying of large trash baskets plus having to put a stop to residents who throw their personal garbage in our receptacles rather than taking it to the green boxes.
- Covering of obscene wording or signs painted on the trail surface.
- Snow plowing as needed by volunteer Phil, a Somers resident.
- Restocking the Mutt Mitt dispensers and emptying the waste containers or removing the discarded bags from the side of the trail.
- Spring cleanup is always a group project.
- Mowing grass/weeds when needed and maintaining the equipment.
- Repairing various signs, benches and fences we have installed.



Two New Homes Along The Trail



Cleaning Up Along The Trail



Definitely A Bluebird House!



These activities are necessary and done on various sections of the 22 miles of trail between Somers and Kila. None of the work gets done on its own. It requires volunteers, each user can do their share by picking up trash that they come upon and picking up their pets waste. This can be a great help along the entire trail. Volunteer work is most rewarding and an excellent means of giving back to one’s community. It is good to be aware of what others have contributed to enrich and maintain this beautiful valley and all it has to offer.

Thanks, Bob Klein

Something new that has been added to the trail scene between Kalispell and Kila. My neighbor wanted to get rid of multiple flower bulbs on his property so I adopted two bunches of them and planted them along the trail. See if you can spot them!



There are slightly fewer than 50 birdhouses along the Heritage Trail between Kalispell and Kila. In the past year they’ve been painted -- NOT for the birds but to bring them to the attention of cyclers, joggers, users of the trail. Take some time to enjoy the birds in their activities.

Somers Trail Head

The S-2 train engine Depot Museum is a work in progress with completion of the exterior and interior of the structure. Next steps are procuring interior display cases and shelving for railroad photos and memorabilia and landscaping around the building. Two picnic tables have been installed for the leisure enjoyment of trail users. Come on down for a peek through the window and don’t forget to stop off at the Somers Bay Café and Del’s Bar, both are strong supporters of Rails to Trails.

By Bob Klein

Rails to Trails 2015 Finance Summary

TREASURER’S REPORT

General Fund	\$62,060.91
DAD	\$100.00 (held open for stock donations)
WFCU	\$ 17,530.15
TOTAL	\$79,691.06

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.