



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/

Thoughts Of A Trail

Here at the Somers Trailhead, spring is the most active and exciting time of the year for me, your trail. Last fall after receiving a fresh seal coating, I prepared to wind down for the winter. I never expected the depth and endurance of this winters snow. Thanks to Phil and Rudy, volunteer Somers residents, who kept me plowed and passable. This also allowed an unusually large number of outdoor enthusiasts to enjoy the healthy activity of walking the trail in winter. Many of the fat-tire bike enthusiasts also ventured out. And of course, I provide a less strenuous means of getting around for the many members of the animal world who often travel the trail.

With spring comes my seasonal cleanup. My seal coating feels great, with very few cracks in evidence. The county recently swept me off, and I hear in the distance cutting equipment being tuned up to keep my edges trimmed.

The Somers school Physical Education classes are back running on me for outdoor activity and meet training. I am seeing a lot of new faces walking and biking upon me. Just the other week six delightful women biked through from Kalispell led by Mary Jo Gardner, heading to Somers Café for lunch. Then I see Carrie with a family of three Small dogs on leash. She was a first time user who just moved to Somers from Seattle. She said I was a much more scenic and enjoyable trail than those in Seattle. Next I am visited by a fine gentleman with his dog on leash who traveled me when I was a railroad track. He grew up in Somers and has walked me many times. In fact he was walking the tracks and called in the alarm when the old Somers school burned many years ago.

The addition of the S2 Train Museum at the trailhead in Somers is attracting Lots of history buffs on foot and by bike. I am so lucky to be the Somers end of the Great Northern Rails To Trails system. I provide good for everyone who uses me, even the pets. What could be more rewarding than helping people achieve enjoyment and healthy outdoor activity in their own back yard?

Come On Out And Enjoy The 22 Miles Of Trail From Somers To Kila!

By Bob Klein



NON-PROFIT
U.S. POSTAGE
PAID
KALISPELL MT
PERMIT NO. 20

THE PATH FINDER



SPRING 2017



President's Message

Dear Trailblazers,

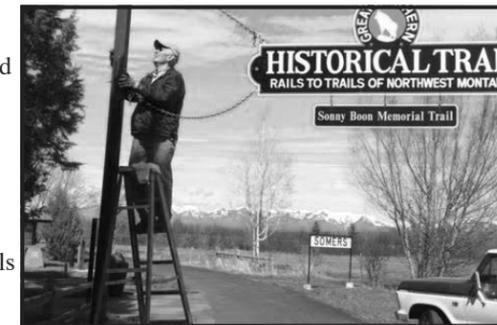
As a reader of this newsletter, you know how important the Great Northern Trail is to the Flathead Valley. You've seen the kids in your neighborhood enjoy a safe walk to school. You've taken your family out for an evening's outing right outside your door. Maybe you've used the trail to commute to work or spend some quality time with your sweetheart. However you and your family enjoy the trail, your continued support is crucial. Thank you.

This summer, we are partnering with Montana West Economic Development (MWED), Flathead County and the Flathead Valley Community College (FVCC) to raise the trail in Kila out of the spring high water. MWED is developing the Glacier Rail Park at the gravel pit between Whitefish Stage Road and US 2. Preparation for construction includes removing excess gravel, which will be used in Kila. This work will be completed by FVCC students and a partnership with Flathead County. A small portion of the funding is provided by Montana Fish Wildlife & Parks via their Recreational Trails Program. Your financial support will allow us to confidently complete this project and plan for additional maintenance efforts.

In April, we participated in a workshop with the City of Kalispell, MWED, and local business leaders envisioning what the trail through Kalispell will look like when it connects our Great Northern Trail on Meridian Road to Woodland Park and US 2. This exciting effort will extend the trail system through the heart of Kalispell.

Our outreach efforts for this year include updating and printing our popular trail map of the Flathead and bringing out an interactive version. 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



Wading Through Kila

Large puddles and heaves in the tarmac are bad memories of past springtime biking on the Kila end of the trail. You may have turned around, slowed down, or gotten a decent 'skunk' stripe up your back for the last few years in Kila. Springtime on the trail always brings the challenges of gravel, bumps, weeds and puddles. We too are tired of the poor condition of the Great Northern Historical Trail. Rails to Trails has been writing grants and sponsoring fund raisers for several years. Grant money for trail maintenance is hard to come by.

Generous donations are needed to complete this project this summer. To fix this 1000' of trail is a huge job. The cost of deconstructing, elevating, placing culverts and asphaltting this small section of the trail has been estimated at nearly \$100,000. The grant money we have been allocated is about \$27,000. (Cont'd)



(Cont'd) Our goal is to rehab this entire stretch of trail but if funding falls short we will be fixing at least the worst of the puddles and heaves. We are planning to work with the Montana West Economic Development Corporation for fill, FVCC's construction classes for heavy equipment and operators, and local volunteers during the warmer dryer weather. With any luck there will be some temporary trail closures this summer. We will try to notify you before these happen.

This section of trail is also linked to the new Kila Community Park. It is a perfect space to make a Frisbee soar, do cart wheels till you lose count or just sit and watch the wonders of Smith Lake. The park wants to raise money for a covered stage, educational signs and a birding scope (P.O. Box 105, Kila). Together we are going to link our newly elevated, dry trail and the Kila Community Park with an ADA accessible path.

Be ready for some fun summer evenings of games, pot lucks and rides around the lake, maybe even a parade or two. We want to encourage local businesses to come and share their ideas, their products, and the reasons we love living in the Flathead. We of Kila want to extend our view and our vision of healthy fun to neighbors from all over the valley. Bicycle trails not only connect communities, they create them. Join us this summer, see you on the trail.

Please check our website (www.railstotrailsofnwmt.com) and our Facebook page for updates on trail closures and trail events.

By Helen Pilling

2016 Harvest Dance & Pie Auction

The Smith Valley Grange was again the site of our annual fund raiser. Grin and Bear It String Clan had us spinning, stomping and clapping to the contra dancing calls of Sarah Burdick. An enthusiastic group of young and old thoroughly enjoyed themselves and made new acquaintances with the frequent "dosey-do's," pass on byes" and "swing your partners". Bidding on delicious and decadent homemade pies was enthusiastic and competitive, managed by auctioneer Sam Scott. (Cont'd)

(Cont'd) If you could not wait to get those pies home, pie slices served à la mode were available throughout the evening. The Silent Auction activity was also enthusiastic, competitive and lucrative contributing to a profit of \$3,000 which will be used for trail maintenance work. Thanks to all who donated pies and helped bid up prices to record levels. Thanks also to local businesses and supporters who donated items for our silent auction. We appreciate your support.

Mark your calendars for the 2017 dance and pie auction on November 11th. Bring a homemade pie (one per person) for free admission and enjoy a night of dancing, merriment and great bargains. Hope to see you there.

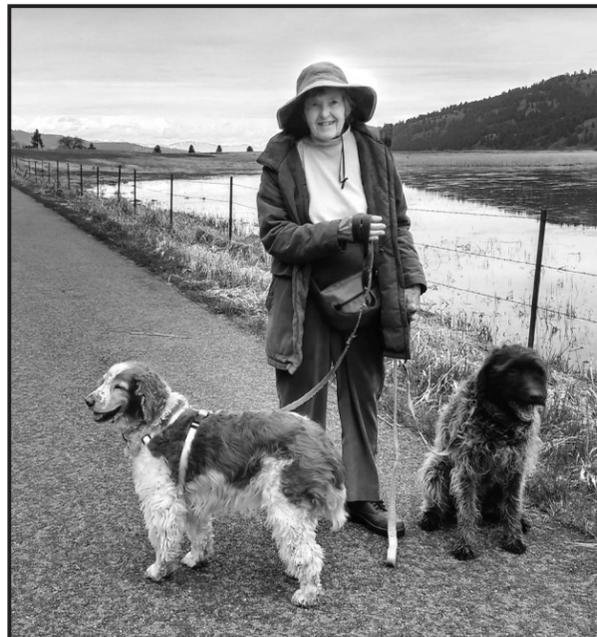
VOLUNTEER OF THE YEAR

Diligent, smart, determined, aware, concerned, dog loving, sensible... these were some of the adjectives I heard when I asked some of Phyllis Snow's friends and coworkers to describe her. What we of Rails to Trails know, she is all of those AND a great team member too. Thank you Phyllis for being a committed volunteer with Rails to Trails of NW Montana for so many years. For the past several years Phyllis has documented and inventoried the extensive tree plantings along the trail. She has researched the many noxious and invasive weed species along the trail and instigated proper methods of treatment and control.

Phyllis moved to Montana to get her PHD in Geology at the University of Montana. Living in the 'real mountains' was something that lured her west from the teaching position she had at Youngstown University. Beyond her dissertation she was offered a job at the Flathead Forest Service as a hydrologist. She was in the second wave of 'ologists' the USFS had ever hired. She explained that before the scientists were hired to check the soils, water and wildlife affected by cutting the trees; it was the loggers and the timber industry that made decisions.

At this time mutual friends hinted that she and Don Snow had 'lots in common', and they did. Their love of music, gardening, bicycling, and sharing concerns for their environment made Phyllis and Don a formidable team. They were married for over 30 years, played in the orchestra, and volunteered for many organizations including Rails to Trails. They planted hundreds of trees, bulbs and wild flowers along our trail as well as picking up trash, weeding and rarely missing a meeting. We all miss Don since his passing, but lucky for us Phyllis is a wise motivated, independent woman. She still walks her dogs every day. She pulls weeds, serves our pies, talks to trail users, picks up trash AND comes to our meetings.

Thank you Phyllis Snow, we of Rails to Trails are so grateful to you, our volunteer of 2017 and beyond.



Along the Trail



Donated by
Rails-To-Trails
 of Northwest Montana
 Installed as a community service by



Flathead Marines
 August, 2016

In early 2016, Harrison Brand, a frequent user of our Rails-to-Trails bike paths here, was enjoying a ride on a similar trail system in southern Utah when he came across a unique bike maintenance stand positioned beside one of the trails there.

Brand researched details and made a presentation to the Rails-to-Trails board last May. The Board immediately saw the value and approved the purchase of two stands, one to be installed at the trailhead in Somers, the other near the trailhead in Kila.

Brand then contacted two organizations he knew would be willing to help construct the concrete base and mount the stands. One was the Flathead Marines, the other the local Boy Scout headquarters, with an offer to make this a project for an Eagle Scout candidate.

The stand in Somers was constructed by former Marines Sean Reynolds and Jon Battle. The one in Kila became the project of Gage Cuthbertson of Scout Troop 1917. Both were completed in August.

Each stand has several tools attached to it as well as a tire pump – everything needed to adjust or repair just about any emergency one might experience during a ride.



Somers Company Town Project / S2 Museum

Somers Company Town Museum is now open Sundays 1-4. We are located on the Rails to Trails path in Somers. Stop in and see our Exhibits which include a Timeline of the Town's History, Information and artifacts that tell all about the Somers Lumber Company started in 1901 by the Great Northern Railroad to produce RR Ties. We also have exhibits about life in a "Company Town" and the Ferries, Tugs and Steamboats on Flathead Lake in the early 1900s.

There will be a Family Fun Run on May 20th in downtown Somers. You can register for the not timed race at 8:30 am at the Museum. This 5k starts at 9. It will go around the streets of old Somers and will also include the Rails to Trails path. Entry fee is Adults \$10, Children \$5 or \$15 per family. Money raised will be used to help build a playground in Somers.



Find Us on www.TrailForks.com!