

THE PATH FINDER

SPRING 2020



President's Message

Look for Summer Trail Fun

(a bicycle parade?)

We Are in This Together

railstotrailsofnwmt.com

wheatonscycle.com

glaciercyclery.com

gncycleski.com

foystoblacktailtrails.org

gatewaytoglacier.com

flatheadbeacon.com

November 14th, 2020
Harvest Dance
and Pie Auction

Please notify us if you do not
want to receive this newsletter.
We do not like waste either.
railstotrailsofnwmt@gmail.com

My Fellow Trailblazers!

The Great Northern Trail has been a refuge for families this year as our routines have been upended and we all are adapting to a new reality. Trails allow us to exercise, recharge and spend time with our families. They allow us to stretch our legs as well as our imaginations. And this year that is as important as ever. For those of us that have loved the trail for years, this year has given us the chance to share it with others. Our community is fortunate to enjoy the trails we have thanks to the hard work that has already been done. But maintenance is an ongoing issue, and we need your continued support.

We applied for a significant grant this year for trail maintenance, but it was turned down. So, we continue to work with other trail organizations and Flathead County to address long term maintenance throughout the County. Please support County-wide efforts to fund maintenance throughout Flathead County. We are proud to be part of a long history of building and maintaining trails in Flathead County and the work doesn't get done without a great community of supporters behind it. Thanks to THIS COMMUNITY, lots of

great things continue to happen!

Kalispell's Core Trail is going to provide a dynamic link into and through downtown Kalispell, driving a transformational shift. We of Rails to Trails are working with Kaliope and KAOS, both groups are inspired community artists and art appreciators. With Kaliope we are planning some murals at the underpasses of our trail. We hope this will dissuade some graffiti. Last summer KAOS held a contest to design bicycle racks to be placed at strategic locations downtown. They are planning on another contest soon.

The Montana Department of Transportation (MDT) is finalizing plans to complete the south portion of the Bypass and rebuild US 2 West and Dern Road. All of these projects will affect the Great Northern Trail at times. We will try to keep the public updated through our website and facebook page.

With your support we can continue this important work. If you are able, please consider supporting us financially and please tell a friend!

I'll see you on the Trail! Mark

- We are looking to set up a "Trail Buddy" system.
- If you are interested in volunteering to pick up trash on any one mile of trail (your choice, maybe by your house or school?) monthly for a season, please contact us via email railstotrailsofnwmt@gmail.com, or call Helen at 752-4766.
- We are also in need of a facebook aficionado who will keep our social media presence up to date.

BIKE WALK MONTANA

www.bikewalkmontana.org

Bike Walk Montana is a motivated organization, based in Helena. They/we wish Montana to be a bike-walk friendly state with innovative, safe and accessible active transportation choices for people of all ages and abilities. Walking, rolling and bicycling can be well integrated into mainstream and safe transportation and recreation systems. As a result of Bike Walk Montana's efforts being heard by local, state and federal governments, Montanans will continue to enjoy an enhanced quality of life with a vibrant economy, cleaner environment and better health.

This time of the pandemic is showing even more clearly how citizens value having infra-structure for moving easily and safely by our own power to get to essential services, to work and to exercise safely. This is the message that Bike Walk Montana, and we all, need to keep communicating and working towards the cultural shift that will make it a reality. By restating our goals and reaching out with a strong message and a willingness to listen we will hopefully come together with both the believers and those that may have opposed us in the past. Maybe, just maybe, they might see things differently now.

Even while putting our 2020 Outdoor Summit on hold and having most events and programs suspended, Bike Walk MT is re-positioning to continue effectively

supporting bike rodeos, walking school buses and senior walks. We are gearing up for the upcoming election and legislature. Engaging with our youth through the Montana Interscholastic Cycling League will continue to be a great connection with future generations of decision makers. We continue to respond to requests for assistance and put out both statewide alerts and our newsletter. I invite you to join our hundreds of members across Montana to strengthen our membership and collective voice. Check out our website at bikewalkmontana.org. This is one tool we have revised and are updating right now to better serve and provide resources to all Montanans.

From the rest of the non-profit world across Montana and the country, I hear that everyone is feeling unmoored, struggling with the reality of never returning to "normal" and unable to grasp what our future will really be. Go easy on yourselves – it is now readily apparent that we really are all in this together and share responsibility for what the future holds. Our very culture is changing, let's embrace that as an opportunity, and build a strong future of bicycling, walking and rolling. Travel Safe!

Doug Habermann

Executive Director – Bike Walk Montana



You can honor your pets (present and past) by purchasing a PET PLAQUE that will be mounted on the trail.

Thank you for picking up after your dogs. However, if you forget your bag, we supply Mutt Mitts



ALONG THE TRAIL (82 - Somers) By Bob Klein

This south end of the trail has been very active over the past year. Almost a year ago now, in late spring, I came upon a man on his bike heavily laden with front and back panniers, pulling a loaded trailer. He was heading across country to Oregon. The really interesting thing is that he was from Northwest Territory Australia!! He had flown into New York's La Guardia airport (with bike and all his gear) with the intention of bicycling across the United States. I invited him to set up his tent on our property and treated him to dinner at Del's Bar. The next morning he packed up his gear and set off heading west. He said his goal is to cover about 45 miles each day.

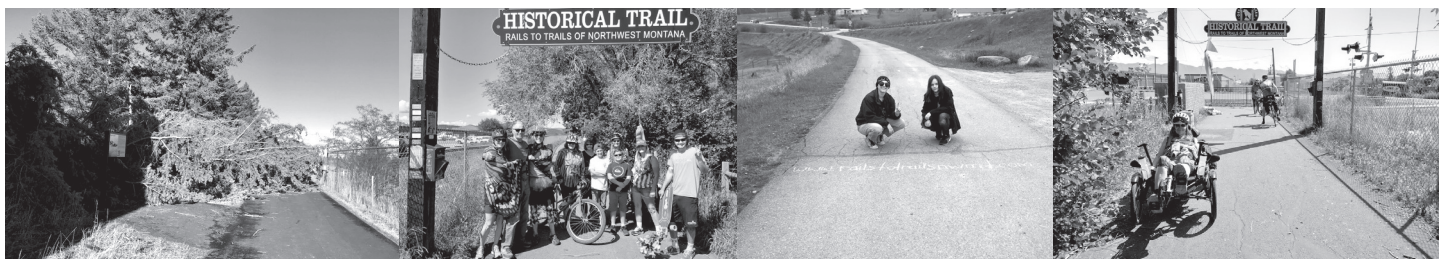
Another day, I came upon Dick, a 91 year old former teacher at Flathead High. He was sitting on the large Sonny Boon memorial boulder at School Addition Road. It was a very hot day and he was without water, looking unsure about completing his outing. I offered him a cool bottle of water and he was on his way again, happy to be out enjoying the trail.

In August, there were several reports of bear sightings along the trail south of Hwy. 82. On several occasions we saw muddy paw prints on the trail where the bear had come up from the slough and crossed the trail.

The mild winter resulted in minimal need to plow and heavy use by winter walkers; a good winter by my standards. In early spring a severe wind storm blew down two large evergreens next to the Ice house, blocking the trail for a few days. Sliter's employees volunteered to clear the trees and a group of Rails to Trails volunteers cleared the smaller debris.

Needless to say this spring the Covid Virus has brought a record number of trail users - walking, biking, roller blading, skate boarding- while being mindful of social distancing.

Many thanks to Flathead County Weed, Parks and Recreation for help with trail maintenance. Jed Fisher's crew did a fine job of cutting between Hwy 82 and Somers making it more enjoyable for the public and Somers Middle School who use it regularly.



RTP Grant Application Rejected

By Kip Smith

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Rails to Trails' application for 2020 Recreational Trails Program (RTP) funding from the Montana Department of Fish, Wildlife and Parks (FW&P) was unsuccessful in getting through the internal review process. Our request for nearly \$99,000, along with \$25,000 in match from Rails to Trails, would have rebuilt approximately one mile of the Kila trail between Whalebone Drive and Smith Valley School. According to the March 9th letter from FW&P, they did not feel our application was strong enough to compete with a large pool of applicants due to "strong concerns about the County's commitment to perform or share in necessary long-term maintenance". This is not a new issue for Rails to Trails or other trail organizations in this valley or state. In the last few months however, Flathead County Weed and Parks Dept. has recently acknowledged their responsibility to maintain our Great Northern Historical Trail. They have been stepping up with their sweeping, mowing, and this past week major downed tree removal. THANK YOU!!

Rails to Trails will continue to work with the county and state, searching for funds, writing grants, picking up trash and promoting trails. As trail users you can easily see there is significant surface work west of town that needs to be addressed for the safety. Paved trails are much more involved and expensive to maintain than dirt or gravel trails. However, the benefits of having a paved trail are easily seen. We have a vision of continuing our GNHT to the Kalispell Core Trail onto Columbia Falls. This would connect Flathead Lake with Glacier Park, 45 miles of safe non-motorized travel! The moratorium on new trails that this county has indicated will not last forever. We the public need to let our commissioners and representatives know how valuable our 'linear parks' are to you and your family. Volunteering to be on any of the county's boards is something we all should consider as active residents. Showing up for their meetings is also a good way to be heard. While FW&P's decision to reject our grant this year is very disappointing, I feel very good about the quality of the application submitted and want to thank the grant committee of Gary Reese, Tony Patterson, Helen Pilling and Mark Crowley for all of their hard work!



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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

 [great_northern_trail](https://www.facebook.com/great_northern_trail)  [@great_northern_trail](https://www.instagram.com/great_northern_trail)

Bench Friends – two of many...

John Jones grew up in Kila Montana. From the original conception of the 'rail trail' John was on board giving us not only historical facts and stories but also hours and weeks of work. Did you know the original road was below the train tracks in Kila? It wasn't until the mid fifties when they decommissioned the railroad through to Marion that the Kila road., which often flooded, was moved onto the rail bed. John retired recently from years working for the State road dept. and was able to help us attain and put in place many, many yards of useful materials to make our trail as wonderful as it is. I am not sure he has been in a machine since he retired. He prefers to go huckleberry picking with his wife and playing with their grand dogs. Thank you John for all you have done for Rails to Trails of NWMT.

Richard Dennis Cohen (May 13, 1953 - July 13, 2019) lived each day with a sense of wonder and a profound love for life. He moved to Whitefish in 1980 where he operated a snowplow business, helped develop Phoenix Composting Toilet Systems and became a licensed master electrical contractor specializing in solar installations. Richard built two environmentally sustainable homes that became demonstration models for minimal footprint and energy conservation. "Living lightly on the land" and "Reduce, Recycle, Reuse" were his personal and professional credos. Richard excelled at distance bicycling (think Highline Hammer followed by a midnight ride up Going to the Sun Road), dancing, sailing, skiing, swimming, solar energy systems... and above all was a loving and loyal partner, brother, uncle, and friend. His friends have proudly donated a bench on the Great Northern Historical Trail in his honor and memory. Enjoy the rest and the view.



YES, WE HAVE BANDANAS!

Support your trail by buying a beautiful and useful bandana, \$8. They are bright red and colorfast. Large size (21"x 21") have many uses. Available in Kalispell at Wheatons and Sportsman or call Mary Jo at 249-2497.