



The Path Finder

Tunnel Vision

It took months of planning and fund raising, seven artists and 120 volunteers, but the first phase of Tunnel Vision succeeded.

The dedication of the five new bike path murals was held October, 2021. The paintings adorn the entrances to the Glacier High School and the Flathead Valley Community College pedestrian tunnels, and the entire length of the Glacier School Tunnel. Gallons of paint were needed to cover the nearly 5,400 sq. ft. of concrete.

More work remains however, with plans to paint the pedestrian tunnel near Lone Pine State Park this summer and anti-graffiti coating will be applied to the Glacier School tunnel to combat scattered vandalism.

Tunnel Vision is a cooperative public art project sponsored by Rails to Trails of Northwest Montana and the KALICO Art Center. The art center, headquartered in downtown Kalispell, began by advertising for artists. It received 60 responses. The choice of five was difficult. Louis Still Smoking and John Isaiah Pepion won the nod for the FVCC tunnel entrance with "The Lost Children" which was inspired by a Blackfeet tale. Grace and Sarah Washko illustrated the entrance on the Kids Sports. Kristy "Krusty" Overman decorated the tunnel entrance facing Glacier High School, and Madison Apple painted a huckleberry

bush across the opposite entrance. The tunnel interior was assigned to a Bozeman artist Griffin Foster. His theme was "Fern Forms," inspired by the foliage of Glacier National Park.

Foster's project required a community-wide mobilization. Kip Smith of Rails to Trails rounded up the paint at reduced prices and solicited a local painter to spray a base coat on the tunnel wall. A team of volunteers followed behind with step ladders and rollers on extension poles to work the gray primer into the concrete. Then over several days in September, a rotation of volunteers showed up for the 'paint-by-numbers' phase. Zooming up and down the tunnel on his bicycle, and working just ahead of the paint crews, Foster spray painted the outline of each plant and marked them with a color code. Volunteers ranging from school children to senior citizens worked in relays in the tunnel.

The "Tunnel Vision" project has been a lot of fun and a lot of work, bringing color and art to this valley's beautiful trail system. Thanks to all who have contributed and to those who will be contributing to Rails to Trails of NW Montana, (envelope enclosed :0) — Rick Hull



Hope springs eternal

I used to think this phrase expressed a desire for an endless spring: "Hope spring is eternal." While that's a pleasant thought, I later realized that to most people, it means that there is always hope. In this long spring we have been having in the Flathead, my hope for you and your family is that this year is healthy and safe. My hope for our community is that our unprecedented growth might bring opportunities and not hardships. My hope for the world is that countries seek peace and the virus runs its course.

The Flathead has seen some exciting projects recently. Most significantly, Kalispell will be completing the Parkline Trail shortly. A major ribbon cutting is scheduled for July 21, 5:30, and there may be events along the trails leading to Kalispell.

MDT is wrapping up the reconstruction of the intersections of the Alternate Route and Foys Lake Road as well as US Highway 2 and Dern Road/ West Springcreek Road. MDT and their contractors did a great job keeping the trails open during construction. We are grateful for their effort. Thanks to the involvement of concerned citizens, MDT included paved parking at the tunnel under the Alternate Route near Lone Pine State Park on Valley View Drive. Take the trail to just south of Foys Lake Road and the tunnel will take you under the Bypass to the trails of Lone Pine.

We have been working with the Flathead Trails Association (FTA) continuing our partnership to improve access to trails throughout the Flathead. This group evolved from the PATHS2 group that worked with Flathead County to update the County's trails plan. Member organizations include the local non-profits promoting trails as well as all the government agencies that wish to participate. One goal is to work with Flathead County to craft a policy that allows trail organizations to perform trail maintenance. This would include training and insurance to protect all parties. Contact your County Commissioners and ask them what they are doing to help.

Thank you for your continued support. And, we'll see you on the Trail!

Mark Crowley
President

Volunteers Extraordinaire

Hi my name is Gus. I live with my mom, Princess, and my people Rick and Jennifer Hull. They are really super nice people. I was one of ten puppies my mother had. Obviously I am the best because I came back after a few months in a different house. I believe they needed me. I pretty much rule the house I tell them when it is time to go outside, when it is time to eat, where all my bones are and where their phones and keys are. I always like to hear Rick describe me as a gentleman in a tuxedo with nowhere to go. Actually we go lots of places. At least thrice a day we walk on the Rails to Trails. There are so many great smells and often other friendly dogs. My mother is kind of boring, but she comes on all the walks. I like to smell and wag at all my new trail friends.

Jennifer usually has treats in her pocket. I will do anything for Jennifer. Rick carries the plastic bags. Princess and I really like it when they wonder off trail and pick up trash. That is when I get to go explore all sorts of smells. My mother, Princess keeps an eye out for potential pats on the head. Following my mighty nose the other day I found a pizza box with pizza bones in it; Jack pot! I ate the bones and brought the box up to Rick. He doesn't like to pick up trash. It turns him into a 'grumpy old man' as he puts it. That is where I shine, I am never grumpy and I don't mind if he is. I usually try to help out; sometimes it's just by greeting the folks under the trestle. They share their trash with us, Rick wishes they would pick up their own trash. I don't quite understand what is, who is, where it all is or goes, but it does smell great and often there are surprises.

It is so nice the days are longer and the weather a little warmer. It takes way less time to get ready for walks, they are longer walks and oh the smells are getting better and better. It is much easier to convince Rick to stop sitting at his desk. He used to push a pencil around but now he moves a mouse. It is not the soft chewy mouse I have been known to sniff out, not at all. He talks about the old days when he was a reporter for the local papers. He and his note pad would listen and write articles on all manner of calm and contentious issues. He now writes with his fingers and mouse mostly for Rails to Trails and The Central School Museum. He calls himself a grumpy old man but really he is happier and a less hurried now. Jennifer never seems to age. I think that is because she always has treats in her pocket.

Rick and Jennifer Hull are definitely people you want on your team. I of course will come with them. I am Gus and I do rule ... cats drool.

Someone you should know: Chris Maestas

Did you all notice the trail was swept in early May? We didn't even have to ask.

We of Rails to Trails are excited to introduce you to Chris Maestas, the new director of Flathead County Weeds, Park and Recreation Dept. When I asked Chris how his first year has been his first words were, "it is the best job ever." Why I wondered? He said he enjoys meeting and working with so many people who are really passionate about their weeds or parks or summer plans for their family. The hardest part of his job he mentioned is having to prioritize. He has many many goals and a great team to work with.

This is great news for Rails to Trails and all trail users. Chris has already obtained a grant for pavement 'preservation' from the state. With the infrastructure money coming to Montana he has applied for capital on a couple

other bigger trail sections (like the Z down to Lawrence Park). He has convinced the commissioners to maintain a fund for maintenance but still sees grant writing as the best use of tax payer's money. He has jumped in with both feet and enjoys the challenge.

Chris has spent hours, weeks, talking with lawyers, volunteers, insurance folks trying to work out a relationship that works. He is meeting many volunteers who are talented, dedicated and confused. Now, individual projects for each of our trails throughout the county, will be listened to and assessed how we volunteers can help maintain and make trails.

He and his wife moved up from Colorado in 2008. As a kid she spent her summers in the Flathead. They knew they wanted to raise their children here and be part of this terrific community. Chris has been a teacher, a parks guy, a carpenter, and a volunteer. He is the hard working voice we need.

Thank you Chris, let's go for a ride.



Earth Day Pick Up and Ride

Earth Day Pick up and Ride around Smith Lake was a remarkable success. We managed to pick 5 hours on Saturday April 23rd, when it wasn't raining or windy. Four dogs and a dozen friends of the Great Northern Historical Trail split forces between Kila and Glacier HS trailheads, with gloves, bikes and great attitudes. Our reward, the 8 mile ride around Smith Lake, was delightful in its spring raptor and waterfowl splendor. There will always be trash to pick up. Have you noticed there is usually a plastic bag in the weeds? Please fill it up with litter and take it to the nearest trash receptacle. **In the case of trash, every little bit does help. Thank You**





THE PATH FINDER NEWSLETTER

Rails to Trails of Northwest Montana
P.O. BOX 1103
Kalispell, MT 59903-1103

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

✉ railstotrailsofnwmt@gmail.com

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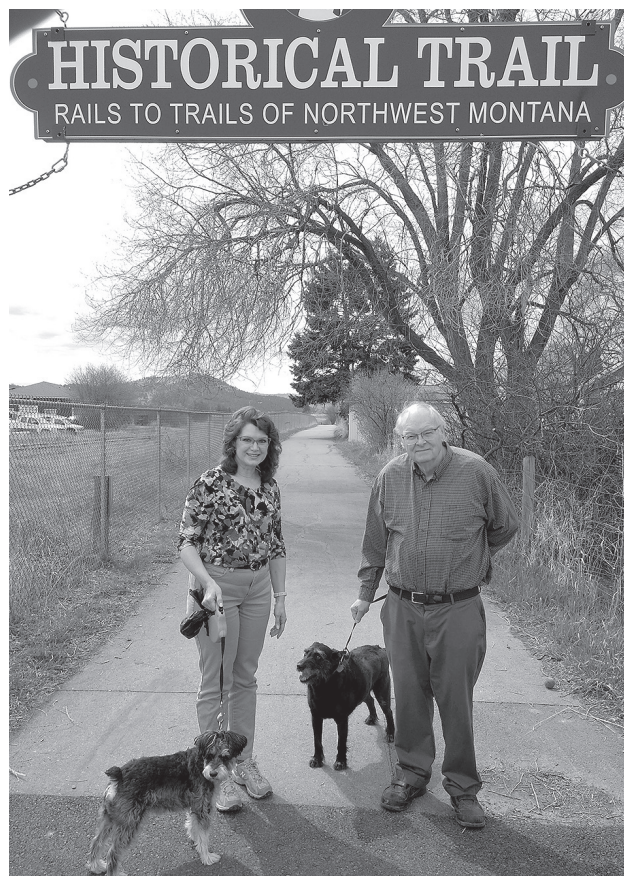
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Summer Dates Not to Miss

- July 9** Pints for Paths:
Gateway to Glacier Fun Fundraiser
- June 18** Bike Walk Montana Divide Scramble
- July 21** Parkline Trail Celebration
- August 26** Kila craft/food/and rummage sale
- Sept 18** Foy's to Blacktail Marathon Trail Run
- October 2** Whitefish Legacy trail run
followed by Flathead Trails
Association public party event

Rails to Trails End of the Season

Second-hand bike and pie sale/auction;
hopefully a bike parade, too.
Keep your ears open and if you have a bike
or pie to donate please let us know.



Jennifer, Princess, Gus, and Rick Hull