



Trail Wise



FALL 2005

A NEWSLETTER FOR PEOPLE INTERESTED IN YEAR-ROUND, MULTI-USE TRAILS IN NORTHERN LOWER MICHIGAN

Top of Michigan Trails Council:

- Servicing the top eight counties of Lower Michigan from Antrim County to Alpena County, north to the bridge.
- Mission: To advocate and facilitate the development of a year-round, multi-use trail network in Northern Lower Michigan.

Funded primarily by generous contributions and memberships from area residents and those who love spending time in Northern Michigan.

FEDERAL FUNDS

On August 10 President Bush signed a new six year \$286 billion transportation bill that promises increased dollars for bike paths and other recreational trails. For the next six years there will be no more "continuing resolutions" from congress to fund at previous levels. We will have more to say about this controversial law later but for now we are very pleased that after two years the federal funds watch box in this newsletter has expired.

Inside this issue:

Finding our Home	2
Priority One Trails Update	2
Who Owns The Trails?	2
Events Summary	3
Events Calendar	3
Makeover for Two Towns	3
The Good Samaritan	3
Trail Mix	4

Maxing out.....MAX IN HIS OWN WORDS

Thanks for your kind thoughts and words. It looks like my retirement will be effective on July 31, 2005, the last day of my employment with Emmet County. Yes, we will remain in Emmet County (3 grandchildren live here). Yes, I hope to remain on the Wheelway Committee as long as Chairman [Fred] Fettis tolerates my presence! I really want to see the Bluff trail completed so that the community can enjoy a great trail resource that links to Charlevoix and Harbor Springs.

I have had a great career experience working for and in Emmet County. People here are really interested and concerned about the future of the community, which is a critical ingredient of planning. Also, the parallel agencies, including the Little Traverse Conservancy, Tip of the Mitt Watershed Council, Top of Michigan Trails Council, Emmet 20/20, the Harbor Area Board of Resources, and others, are great community resources that do not exist in every community, so we are fortunate to have their talents working for the betterment of Emmet County. I have always felt a strong sense of pride to be the Planning Director and have never once regretted my decision to accept that position. We are fortunate that the many County Boards of Commissioners have supported a planning service since 1967 and that there is commitment to continue on into the future. That is a great expression of vision.

I hope this helps you some. As you realize many projects that come up for review are controversial, seem to generate a lot of heat, and frequently lead to some despair. However, controversy is also a sign of interest in what is happening and where we are going. For the most part it is a sign of democracy and is healthy.

Max

Editor's Note: On July 31 Max Putters retired from his post as Emmet County Planner after 33 years. We recently wrote to praise him for his long service to the community and to trails in particular and ask about his future plans. His response demonstrates his characteristic modesty and his faith in our ability to solve our problems. We thought we would publish his letter in its entirety, in fact letting him speak for himself. You will see how lucky we have been to have such a friend in the Emmet County Planning office and that he will continue to work for trails as a continuing member of the Little Traverse Wheelway Committee. As you see, we are most grateful for the grandchildren that will keep him here. To honor his service Max's family and Emmet County have combined to plant a tree on US 31 above the Bluffs in Resort Township..



THERE WILL BE EXCITING NEWS IN THE WINTER TRAIL WISE ABOUT THE COMPLETION OF THE LITTLE TRAVERSE WHEELWAY

www.trailsCouncil.org

GO THERE

FINDING A HOME in the garden

Neal McCue's nostalgic portrait of our organization has reminded us of our early difficulties in finding a home. As you know, we were founded in 1995 by **Tom Bailey**, **Horace Huffman**, and other leaders in the Little Traverse Conservancy and in fact our first "office" was located in the conservancy building on Powell Road in Harbor Springs. Then, **Dr. John Tanton**, another TOMTC lifesaver, offered us space in U.S. Inc., his umbrella organization that promotes various worthy causes. The new office was located "up a severe climb up a narrow staircase" to a cramped room at 316 1/2 East Mitchell St. in Petoskey. We remained married to U.S. Inc. when they moved to quarters at 445 East Mitchell St. by taking over a larger but still tiny room in the back of their space. Then in 2001 when a more commodious space opened up in the basement or "Garden Level," as our landlord affectionately calls it, we moved downstairs to where we now rent two spacious rooms at a reasonable rate from the Petoskey Land and Cattle Company. Our heartfelt thanks to Tom Bailey and John Tanton for making space available to us in our early years when we needed it.

Information for this article was taken from **Neal McCue's** 10th Anniversary history of TOMTC. View his entire article on the web. Click on "About Us." Printed copies are available in the office for \$1.00.

PRIORITY ONE TRAILS UPDATE

Huron-Sunrise Trail to Forty Mile Point: MDOT is still considering competing route proposals. The Presque Isle County Board has gone on record in support of the project. A connector into Hoeft St. Park was dedicated in July.

Little Traverse Wheelway, Resort Bluffs "gap:" Only one easement (132 feet) remains to be obtained. We think we are closing in on success.

Gaylord to Mackinaw City Trail: In May we received a 1.5 million dollar federal grant to improve the entire 62 miles with crushed limestone. We are working with the DNR to put together the required local match to begin construction that we believe will commence in the summer of 2006. The Mac City in-town connector to the trailhead is now under construction.

Little Traverse Wheelway completion into Harbor Springs: Good progress continues to be made in obtaining easements for the trail to the north of M-119. The end (into Harbor Springs) is near.

Boyne City to Charlevoix: Preliminary engineering studies are complete. We expect to have an application for a federal TEA grant ready for submission sometime this fall.

WHO OWNS THE TRAILS? Railroad Reversion Law 101

Here is a question that frequently comes up in trail conversation: How is it that some abandoned rail lines or parts of them rather easily fall into the hands of state or local government while others end up in private hands? The answer is that there is no single answer. It depends on whether the right of way was originally owned by government, by the railroad, or by a private party. If the right of way was established with an easement it depends on the language of the easement at the time it was granted or by subsequent amendment. It may also depend on the language of the permitted uses and as a practical matter on the political opinion of the people along the way. Thus each case has to be considered separately in determining ownership and/or the value of an easement.

In a recent case regarding a 14 mile trail from Calumet to Hancock in the Upper Peninsula, the State Supreme Court ruled that a private landowner had the right to fence off his part of the RR right of way because the 1873 easement deed restricted use only to the railroad.

We have several places, especially on the Petoskey-Mackinaw City Trail where there are significant private holdings that break up the continuity of the route. TOMTC is working with the owner of most of the corridor, the MDNR, to find a way through these private holdings, either through purchase or easement, that will make a continuous and improved trail possible. Meetings have been held with interested persons in Alanson and Pellston to help define the route through those villages.

We should also note that as a 501 C-3 Non-Profit Organization we do not own any trails in our entire 200 mile "network." We are entirely an advocacy group for trails, seeking to improve the ones that already exist in our eight county "jurisdiction," as well as identifying other routes that will serve the public interest. For more on this topic see our website. Click on "About Us."

EVENTS CALENDAR

August 31 (W)-Sept. 5 (M) DALMAC Rides, Lansing (517) 882-3700

September 10 (S) Cheboygan to Indian River Ride*

September 30-October 2 (F-Sun) BIKETOBERFEST, Boyne Falls. (248) 549-1072, www.zoo-de-mack.com

* TOMTC sponsored event. To register call (231) 348-8280. For a full ride description go to www.trailsCouncil.org.



AWAKENING IN ALANSON, PELLSTON

We think you will soon see a “new look” in the Villages of Alanson and Pellston as they work with us and the DNR to fill in the “gaps” that currently exist in the right-of-way on the Petoskey-Mackinaw City Trail. Public meetings were held in both places in late August to discuss ideas to find a practical and esthetic way through the communities for trail users. Professional design services are being provided by O’Boyle, Cowell, Blalock & Associates, which has also made an in-kind donation for the \$25,000 project. Other funding is coming from the DNR, MDOT, the Frey Foundation, the First Federal Community Foundation, and the Petoskey-Harbor Springs Community Foundation.

TOMTC is serving as the contract manager and recipient of the funds after approving the project at the July 12 board meeting. Area DNR Trail Coordinator **Emily Meyerson** has brought the project together.

Interest in this trail was stimulated recently when the DNR declared it’s intention that that the trail should be developed into a major snowmobile route, hence the need to reestablish the integrity of the trail. It’s a great opportunity for Alanson, Pellston, and TOMTC.

RIDES OF SUMMER

June 4, National Trails Day Ride. Charlevoix-Bay Harbor on the Little Traverse Wheelway. 75 riders, 75 degrees, partly cloudy, tee shirts to all registrants.

June 11, Ride Around Paradise Lake. 20 riders, 75 degrees, partly cloudy, nice lunch at **Goldie’s** afterwards.

June 25, Ride to the Oden Fish Hatchery with the Little Traverse Conservancy. 18 riders, 80 degrees, partly cloudy, excellent sandwiches from **Toski Sands Deli** after the tour. Commentary from **Tom** and **Alison** en-route and **Mike** at the hatchery. (See group photo of riders at left)

July 9, Huron-Sunrise Trail Ride. 16 riders, 82 degrees, sunny. Riders helped dedicate the newly completed spur into Hoeft State Park. Expert commentary by **Mary Ann** en-route. Good food and trail talk afterwards at **Karstens Restaurant**.

July 23 Alpena Bi-Path Ride. 9 Riders, 84 degrees, sunny. Hot food in a cool room afterwards at **JJ’s Sports Bar and Grill**.

August 6, Mackinaw City Loop Ride. 18 Riders, 78 degrees, sunny, super lunch after a great ride at **Audie’s Restaurant**.

August 20, Festival on the Bay Ride in Petoskey. Rain moved in at the scheduled 8 am start of the ride, The result was no riders, or rather one rider in a wet suit. This was our first truly unbikeable day of the summer. One rider, 65 degrees, rain. Our thanks to **Big Apple Bagels** of Petoskey for providing the bagels that were donated to charity.

NORTH COUNTRY TRAIL CONFERENCE

Our friends from the North Country Trail Association held their national conference in Petoskey in mid-August. Board Member **Neal McCue** and LTC Chief **Tom Bailey** spoke to the group about the cooperation between TOMTC, the Little Traverse Conservancy, and the NCT Association in this area and volunteer **Tom Stanley** led a hike through an area that showed this cooperation on the ground. The NCT is a mainly hiking trail that stretches through seven states from New York to North Dakota. It enters Lower Michigan in Hillsdale County and exits over the Mackinaw Bridge into the Upper Peninsula. In our area the trail runs north through Antrim, Charlevoix, and Emmet Counties. **Jerry Keeney** of Harbor Springs is the local head of the NCT Association.

CHURCH BECOMES A GOOD SAMARITAN

You might not be heading for Jericho but you still might want to say thank you very much to the **First Presbyterian Church of Bay Shore** for helping weary travelers along the Little Traverse Wheelway. In addition to providing benches at the de-facto parking lot near West Park, the church has offered clean restrooms and cold drinking water inside the church across US 31 from the lot. If you have benefited from the Church’s kindness, or even if you haven’t why not write a note to them ? 06072 US 31 N

Charlevoix, MI 49720

SEE OUR NEW WEBSITE at: www.trailsCouncil.org go there

TRAIL MIX



ARE THESE GENTLEMEN FRIENDS OF TRAILS?

You betcha. From left **Jeremy Wills**, **Ron Scriven**, **Gene Juday**, **Mike Kuhna**, and **Fred Fettis** doing some much needed maintenance on the Little Traverse Wheelway in June.

Also thanks to **John Paulus** for his help on trail rides and in the office, **Georgia and Wayne Lindstrom** for their efforts to increase membership from the L'Arbre Croche Association, **Jerry & Deb Krans** for their work in organizing the Alpena Ride, **Mary Ann Heidemann** for her work on the Rogers City Ride, **Bill Porter** for pasting labels, **Chris Anderson** for helping to solve a thorny computer problem and **Sue Stanley** for helping in a multitude of ways.

TOMTC

445 East Mitchell St.
Petoskey, MI 49770
Tel: (231) 348-8280
Fax (231) 348-8304

Email: info@trailsCouncil.org
Web: www.trailsCouncil.org

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BRILLBOARDS COME DOWN

The billboards in front of the Pellston Regional Airport formerly owned by Don Brill tumbled down suddenly in July as the result of condemnation action ordered by Emmet County. Although TOMTC takes no position on the efficacy of billboards per se, this action benefits us because it restores the old railroad right of way that the county intends to make a part of the Petoskey –Mackinaw City Trail.

When fully developed the trail will permit safe use along all of its 35 miles.

GOT TRAILS?

Wisconsin does and Dr. TOMTC has ridden some of them. Based on a recent trip to the Badger State, he recommends the Green Circle Trail in Stevens Point, the Fox River Trail near Green Bay and portions of the Oak Leaf Trail in Milwaukee, the Capital City Trail in Madison, the Military Ridge Trail east of Mt. Horeb, the Tomorrow River Trail west of Scandinavia, and the Wiowash Trail into Oshkosh. OK, forget the Wiowash bi gosh. It wasn't that good.

In what was apparently an amicable parting of the trails, the Michigan Office of **Rails-To-Trails** has become its own organization called **The Michigan Trails and Greenways Alliance (MTGA.)** We have been friends with both the national and state groups and expect to remain so now. Best wishes to **Nancy Krupiarz** and the soon-to-be independent MTGA!

Kudos...

To Board Member **Al Dika**, the former mayor of Harbor Springs, who was named the city's "Citizen of the Year." Al's award came in part because of his active work on our board, the Little Traverse Wheelway Committee, and Harbor Inc, the visioning group that is working toward completion of the Little Traverse Wheelway into Harbor Springs.

The Northeast Michigan Council of Governments is moving ahead with a Management Plan for the Sunrise Coastal Highway (US-23). TOMTC is seeking to assure that trails are a part of that plan.

OUR READERS WRITE

And we respond

M.D. wrote that it "would be helpful if the newsletter can be organized...to address all the points in the strategic plan...if that trail (Boyne City-Charlevoix) is truly one of the top three priorities of the Trails Council, why wouldn't its status be worth mentioning four times a year?"

We agree and will try to update readers on our top priorities in each issue. See "Priority Trails Update," page 2.

D.B. wrote in response to our asking whether user fees were the way to go with our northern Michigan trails. "I am a proponent of user fees for trail acquisition and maintenance....It seems that a nominal fee for everyone would go such a long way to keeping the trails viable and in excellent shape for years to come. It would also allow additional trails to be built, thus increasing the number of people using the trails."

We appreciate the thoughtfulness of these comments. There are practical problems to requiring fees and there remain philosophical objections. But they do raise much needed monies for trails. In our area the jury will be out on this question for awhile.

K & M wrote: We thoroughly enjoyed riding the trail from Petoskey to Charlevoix (and back).... **And thank you for your \$50 membership.**

G.S. wrote: Thank you for sending the bike trail info so quickly...it was a wonderful vacation and [I] just wanted you to know. **And thank you for your kind words.**

NEW BIKE CLUB IS BORN

Members of the Little Traverse Bay Kiwanis Club in Petoskey have formed a cycling club on the model of the Little Traverse Travelers, an earlier club that disbanded in 1976. For more info contact Jeremy Wills by phone at (231) 347-6284 or by e-mail at: jeremywills68@hotmail.com.