



Trail Wise



SUMMER 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

As of press time both houses of the federal congress had passed a new transportation spending bill that includes monies for trails. After the bill is reconciled in conference it will go to the president to be signed into law unless he decides to veto it. The Senate version of the bill provided for more money than the president said he would accept.

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BIG NEWS ON TWO FRONTS

On the eastern front the DNR has announced the acceptance of a grant from MDOT for the enhancement of the Mackinaw City-Gaylord Trail. This long awaited action paves the way (with limestone) to a smoother trail and represents a victory for TOMTC and the Cheboygan Trail Committee, both of which have long advocated improvement of a previously “improved” part of the 14 miles between Mackinaw City and Cheboygan and a “new” improvement of the beautiful 49 mile stretch between Cheboygan and Gaylord. DNR Director **Rebecca Humphries** did not rule on an alternative snowmobile route to Cheboygan on the east side of Mullet Lake but did confirm that the Mullet Lake segment will remain a “quiet trail.” The DNR and the Cheboygan Committee are working on a package of monies totaling more than \$300 K to fulfill the 20 % local match required by the grant.

Congratulations to **Jim Conboy** of the Cheboygan Trail Committee and to DNR Trail Coordinator **Emily Meyerson** for their effective advocacy.

In the west, the DNR has decided to make a priority of improving the Petoskey-Mackinaw City Trail, in part because it can serve as a snowmobile trail north from Gaylord via Indian River and Alanson. This is good news for us because it pushes this trail onto the “to-do” list.

In the coming years there will much work ahead in enlisting support of communities along the way and filling in the “gaps” that exist in Conway, Alanson, Brutus, and Pellston. One such gap is the .75 mile stretch in front of the Pellston Airport that has recently been acquired by Emmet County for a new road as part of a new look for the entrance. Among other things, the county plans to remove the large billboards on the old right-of-way and restore a corridor for the trail.

DO WE HAVE A NEW E-MAIL ADDRESS?

Well, sort of. You may have noticed on our new website our address is info@tomtc.org while you remember us at tomtc@freeway.net. So what gives?

The answer is that in changing our website we contracted with Gaslight Media for an e-mail address that would stay the same for all time no matter which server we would use. So the new address is correct. But not to worry..... the old one will still work.

HONORING OUR FOUNDERS

The Annual Meeting celebrating our tenth anniversary and honoring our founders took place on May 24 at the Petoskey-Bay View Country Club. Although only one of the founders (**Dave Irish**) was actually in attendance, **Eric Loyd** and his daughter **Katy** represented “**Huffy**” and there were several other original board members and other key people from the early days present.

In his keynote address, **Tom Bailey** of the Little Traverse Conservancy, the organization from which TOMTC sprang forth, paid homage to “**Huffy**” and said that the role that they and others played in our founding was the most satisfying achievement of his professional life.

In a dynamic and passionate speech, he asserted that trails are not only desirable but necessary in northern Michigan today. He recalled that in his childhood in the Upper Peninsula, kids could connect to nature by riding their bikes anywhere without taking their lives in their hands, learn to fish, look under stones to see what was underneath. Today all of us regardless of age need safe trails to join us to nature. He quoted **Walt Whitman** who wrote “Now I know the secret of making the best persons. It is to grow in the open air and eat and sleep with the earth.”

President **Jerry Corley** also briefly summarized the status of all of our trails including the blockbuster news from the Mackinaw City-Gaylord Trail.

Vice President and emcee **Charlie MacInnis** kept the 55 attendees chuckling with his witty introductions and repartee.

What We've Accomplished in ten years

We didn't invent the internet, win the cold war, or end welfare as we know it. But we did do something wonderful in the public interest in northern Michigan.

It turns out that TOMTC's founding ten years ago coincided with the railroad companies' abandonment of several lines in Northern Michigan. Seeing an excellent opportunity to "bank" these lines for trails, our founders worked hard to convince state agencies to acquire the rights-of-way on lines that ran through eight northern Michigan counties rather than just the three included in the original vision. Thus the Cheboygan-Gaylord and Mackinaw City to Hawks corridors became part of our trail network in addition to the Little Traverse Wheelway in Emmet and Charlevoix Counties, the Petoskey-Mackinaw City Trail in Emmet County, and the Mackinaw City-Cheboygan Trail in Cheboygan County. Since then other trails and trails-to-be have come under our umbrella. See our website for a inventory and updated description of all our trails.

Information for this article was taken from **Neal McCue's** 10 Anniversary History of TOMTC. View his entire article on the web. See "About Us," click on "Tenth Anniversary." Printed copies are also available at the office.

BAD HAIRCUT

You may have wondered about the unsightly logging that was done this spring between just north of Blumke Road and the Village of Alanson (a distance of about 1.5 miles) on the Petoskey-Mackinaw City Trail. It seems that the owner of the corridor, who has been negotiating with the DNR to sell the property, decided to log it off. At this point, it is still not clear whether he intends to continue negotiations to sell. This is the same owner who removed the rail bed on the Alanson end to make way for commercial development.

The owner's action, while completely legal, underscores the importance of maintaining or obtaining intact and scenic public corridors available for trails.

Most of the Petoskey-Mackinaw City Trail (see story above) was acquired by the DNR in the mid-nineties but several segments such as this one found their way into private hands.

TOMTC'S BELIEVE IT OR NOT

Working as closely with trails as we do it's hard for us to believe that some people do not share our enthusiasm. We wonder how could this be?

Just like any other public projects, trails run into some opposition, especially NIMBY opposition. (Not in My Backyard). Concerns include safety, vandalism, and liability. Many studies have examined these issues and have found that these problems rarely materialize and can be addressed by a solid design and management plan. It is also important to build strong support by keeping the public informed about the project and involved in the planning process. (From *Rails-to-Trails*)

BOARD NEWS

Board Member **Lucas Porath** along with his wife and two children enjoy biking, running, and cross country skiing. He is a civil engineer at Northwest Design group where he has helped to plan many of our trails and others in Michigan. He grew up in Charlevoix and has lived in Charlevoix and Petoskey since graduating from Michigan State University in 1997.

Jim and Rita Tuttle replace Mary Ann Heidemann as Regional Representatives from Rogers City. They have been retired for 13 years and moved to Rogers City from Flint. Besides biking they have enjoyed camping, backpacking, and cross country skiing. Primarily "roadies" they have long been interested in promoting bike trails like the Huron-Sunrise Trail that runs directly across the street from their home. Welcome aboard!!

At the April 12 meeting the Board voted to allow **electronic notification** of meetings of both the annual meeting and other meetings as may be called. This means that members who ordinarily hear from us by e-mail or are prompted by a postcard to go to the website to read the newsletter will now receive notification of meetings the same way.

The Board also voted to recommend **Fred Fettis** and **Neal McCue**, who had been term limited for a year, back to the Board for a three year term. (Both were elected later at the Annual Meeting) At the same time they voted to require that the remaining two spaces, replacing **Alison Adams** and **John Paulus** who have resigned, be filled by people from someplace other than Petoskey and Harbor Springs so as to increase its **geographical diversity** over our entire area. Then, at the Annual Meeting **N. David Scott** of East Jordan was elected after a nomination from the floor.

Thank you and Godspeed to Alison and John.

COMMON CAUSE

The Winter, 2005 edition of *Michigan Bicyclist* reminds us of the community of interest we have with the League of Michigan Bicyclists in Lansing. Although the League advocates only for bicycles regardless of venue while we advocate for trails regardless of who uses them, we have found that we have a great deal in common.

Many of the LMB interests mirror our own, the project to make Michigan a "Bicycle Friendly State," support for the Governor's "Safe Routes to School Project," support for a bill in the federal congress that would provide tax advantages to employers if their workers used alternative transportation to get to work, and helping with bike programs in Grand Rapids and on the MSU campus.

The LMB also sponsors an extensive summer bicycle ride schedule with some attractive options. One that we especially like takes place between August 6-12 and features crossing to Wisconsin on one ferry, biking to the other ferry, crossing back to Michigan and biking back to the start point. See their website at www.LMB.org.

The LMB recently announced the death of its executive director **Lucinda Means**. Lucinda was a tireless and effective advocate for the LMB's mission. We in the trails community mourn her untimely death. For information on a memorial fund, see the LMB website.

EVENTS CALENDAR

- June 4 (S) National Trails Day Ride, Charlevoix*
- June 4 (S) Harbor Springs Cycling Classic, (231) 526-2151
- June 11 (S) Around Paradise Lake, Carp Lake*
- June 18 (S) Pink Ribbon Bike Ride, Boyne City, (231) 536-7066
- June 22-26 Th-Sun) Grand Traverse Adventure, Traverse City League of Michigan Bicyclists (517) 334-9100, www. LMB.org
- June 25 (S) Ride to the Oden Fish Hatchery, Petoskey*
- July 9 (S) Huron-Sunrise Trail Ride, Rogers City*
- July 23 (S) Ride the Alpena Bi-Path, Alpena*
- July 31 (Sun) Mackinaw Multi-Sport Mix, Mackinaw City, www.3disciplines.com
- July 30-August 6 or 7 (S-S/Sun) West Shoreline Tour, Pentwater (League of Michigan Bicyclists, (517) 334-9100, www. LMB.org
- August 6 (S) Mackinaw City Looper, Mackinaw City*
- August 20 (S) Ride by the Bay, Petoskey*
- August 21 (Sun) Petoskey Triathlon, www.3disciplines.com
- 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 events, To register call (231) 348-8280, For a full ride description go to www.trails council.org.

ON THE SURFACE.....

you might think it doesn't matter much. But in fact the surface of our trails often must satisfy several user groups. The following paragraph was taken from the Executive Summary prepared by DNR Trail Coordinator **Emily Meyerson** for development of the Mackinaw-Hawks trail and illustrates this point.

"Various types of ...standards were reviewed and discussed...Making the trail accessible for the highest and best uses, including snowmobiles in winter and bicycles and pedestrians the rest of the year, was the number one goal of the plan. Therefore a combination of ...standards is recommended to comply with (the desires) of the various user groups. They include:

- A 10' hard surface of crushed-packed limestone with asphalt in recommended areas and recommended by the DNR
- A 2' crushed stone shoulder on one side and a 4' crushed stone shoulder on the other.
- A 12' vertical clearance
- Signs placed 3' to 5' off the surface."

Our trails are all different from one another in their locations, routes, and mix of user groups. Surface does matter.

NOTES FROM THE LITTLE TRAVERSE WHEELWAY

Little Traverse Township has announced its priorities for 2005-06 which includes completion of the bike path into the City of Harbor Springs.

East Park at the eastern end of Bay Harbor has been closed for the time being to accommodate the clean-up efforts that are necessary to remove contaminated leachate from the site. Thank you to Bay Harbor for establishing a temporary trail-head in the upper parking lot of the Marina District. Watch for signs.

In the City of Petoskey the trail will be soon relocated closer to the bay from Wachtel Ave to west of Ingalls Avenue as part of a city project that includes burying electrical lines and installing new sewer lines along Lake Street.

The LTW has hosted several community events already this spring including the March of Dimes Walk America and Relay for Life. On May 20 Charlevoix resident and cancer survivor **Michelle Rick-Biddick** completed a solo triathlon that ended in Charlevoix. She biked, swam, and ran to raise awareness of her illness and hopes to expand the event to include other athletes in the future. To participate or for more information call her at (231) 547-4369.



Left: The Road to Hawks. 2004

Join us on our Trail Rides this summer.

DOG DO'S AND DON'TS

If you fear a loose dog on a trail consider carrying an "English Bobby Style or dog training whistle. These are likely to stop charging dogs in their tracks and send them heading for home."

This advice on dealing with dogs as well as every other conceivable thing you might need to know about riding a bicycle in Michigan is contained in a neat little publication entitled "**What Every Michigan Bicyclist Needs to Know, A Guide for Bicyclists.**" The booklet, which is small enough to fit in your back pocket, is published by The Michigan Department of Community Health (www.michigan.gov/MDCH) and the League of Michigan Bicyclists (www.LMB.org). We also have copies available at our office.

SEE OUR NEW WEBSITE at: www.trails council.org GO THERE

TRAIL MIX

SMOOTH PATHS AND ROUGH

As a single issue interest group, we watch closely those developments that might be good or bad for trails. In Michigan there is at least one good trend.

- MDOT, a historic foe of sidewalks and bike lanes, is now partnering with trails groups to create more non-motorized pathways. In fact the state's "Cool Cities" and "Safe Paths to Schools" initiatives should be considered pro-trail.

On the bad side there are several trends to consider.

- Accelerated development along trail rights-of-way.
- A state budget crisis that make state trail funds harder to get.
- Federal budget deficits that threaten to halt money for trail projects.
- The possible divestiture by the state of lands that might be used for trails. This includes the rights-of-way of some of our undeveloped rail trails.

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FRIENDLY PERSUASION

is what we engaged in when we added our voice to many others in supporting the continuation of the taxes on gas and oil going into the Michigan Natural Resources Trust Fund. We joined other groups and individuals in filing an Amici Curiae (Friend of the Court) motion before the Michigan Supreme Court in the case of *Comben v State of Michigan*. The trust fund is an important source of money for trail acquisition and improvement. It is not currently known when the court will act.

"A PRESCRIPTION FOR EXERCISE" might be the most important prescription a physician writes all day" says **Dr. JoAnn Manson**, chief of preventive medicine at Brigham and Woman's hospital in Boston. She points out that the medical community has been slow to advocate exercise to prevent disease and needs to counsel patients of exercise and weight control.

Climb two hills and call me in the morning?

Regional Representative **Erin Fanning** of Millersburg is at it again. Read her excellent article on Clare County in the Spring, 2005 issue of *Whisper in the Woods, Michigan's Nature Journal*. The county accommodates part of the Pere Marquette Trail between Clare and Midland. Erin is a free lance writer who co-authored *Mountain Bike Michigan* with her husband Keith.

TRAILS IN SPACE?

It could possibly happen.
After all, we are a
501 C3PO organization.

Consider the LOWLY BICYCLE

in a new book by **David V. Herlihy** entitled *Bicycle: The History*. This book explores the history of our favorite method of conveyance from its invention in the 19th Century and its turn-of-the century role as a "new thing" to the many roles it plays today in transportation and recreation. It is available from Yale University Press (<http://yalepress.yale.edu>). You'll be amazed at how the bicycle has been regarded by people in our history.

HOW NOT TO BUILD A TRAIL

The *Muskegon Chronicle* of February 24, 2005 contains an article that describes how not to build a trail. Apparently the 3/4 mile Apple Avenue Bike Path in Egelston Township has had a "tortured history," as described by the paper. Problems included divided leadership, political confusion, cost overruns, poor construction, and inadequate oversight. It was as one township supervisor said, shaking her head, a "lesson learned."

Their experience points up the need to have coherent plans worked out well in advance with all the parties on board from the start. And it's important also to reject the project if the contractors' performance is not up to the agreed standard AS WE FOUND OUT with the initial "improvement" of the Mackinaw City to Cheboygan Trail.

The MAC CITY-HAWKS TRAIL

PLAN is now ready for public inspection. You can link to the draft plan at www.mackinawcity.org/trailplan.htm. The main segment of this trail between Cheboygan and Hawks passes through 43 miles of some of the wildest and most remote territory in our northern Michigan. The plan was put together after a series of public meetings chaired by DNR Trail Coordinator **Emily Meyerson**. The public may comment through July 8. Contact Emily at emeyerson@charter.net.