



PARTNERSHIP IS KEY TO BUILDING A GREAT TRAIL ON A GREAT LAKE

***“Alone we can do so little;
together we can do so much.”***

~ Helen Keller

Construction of the Gitchi-Gami State Trail (GGST) is possible only with the partnership and collaboration of many entities. The original partners, who signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) in 1999, were the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources (DNR), the Minnesota Department of Transportation (MnDOT), and the predecessor of the Gitchi-Gami Trail Association (GGTA). A new MOU was signed in November 2013, adding three new partners: the Arrowhead Regional Development Commission (ARDC), Cook County, and Lake County. Other important partners are the Parks & Trails Council of MN; the cities of Two Harbors, Beaver Bay, Silver Bay, and Grand Marais; and the townships of Lutsen, Tofte, and Schroeder.

The DNR and MnDOT cooperate in the development of funding proposals, design and construction engineering, planning, administration, and final construction. The DNR also coordinates routine maintenance and repair of the trail.

The GGTA has an advisory role in trail planning, design, development, funding, and promotion of the trail. We are fortunate to be able to partner with the ARDC for administrative service and other assistance. Our board has contracted with Michelle Pierson, ARDC project assistant, to serve as GGTA's executive director. ARDC also provides support in the preparation of grant proposals and distribution of brochures and other informational materials.

Support of our federal and state legislators has been critically important. While serving in Congress representing Minnesota's 8th District, the late Congressman James Oberstar, a great supporter of Minnesota trails, was instrumental in securing federal transportation funds for the GGST. In Minnesota, special recognition must be given to Senator Tom Bakk and Representative Rob Ecklund for their work to include and retain funding for the trail in bi-annual bonding bills.

But passage of state bond funding requires the support of legislators throughout the state. To sustain the momentum to complete the full 89 miles of the GGST from Two Harbors to Grand Marais, we need YOU. You can partner with the GGTA by contacting your legislators to support funding for the trail during the current legislative bonding session.

Other ways to partner with us are to join and donate funds to the GGTA, to join our board and/or otherwise to volunteer your time and talents in assistance to the GGTA, and to support and participate in our ongoing activities. Together, we can do so much!

~ Bruce Martinson, GGTA President



Trail Coordinator's Report

Winter is here, and snow has settled in the quiet woods and on the GGST. That doesn't mean that the trail is unused in winter (see the masthead on the front page)! Nor does it mean that it has been as quiet as a winter landscape behind the scenes! In fact, the DNR has been working hard with the GGTA and other partners preparing for the upcoming construction season and planning future projects. Here's an overview of where we are with trail development:

This winter, on-site preparations for construction of the Cut Face Wayside to Grand Marais segment of the trail are ongoing. The trail alignment will be cleared, making way for construction of the Fall River Bridge. Paving the trail will follow, including preparing the grade and ditches, laying down the subgrade materials and then the asphalt pavement. Much of this work will take place this spring.

Working closely with MnDOT, DNR is still in the process of determining trail alignment and right of way from the



to Bluefin Bay Resort. Closing the Tofte "gap" and providing a safe crossing of Hwy 61 in Tofte are important goals, but increased costs of other ongoing GGST projects and challenging terrain in this area require that these plans be reevaluated and incorporated in future construction projects.

In Lutsen, construction of approximately 1.5 miles of trail connecting the Ski Hill Road to the town center (and possibly beyond) is proposed for completion in 2021-22. Development of

the trail in Lutsen is part of future planning considered at a series of community meetings last year. (See the Executive Director's report below.)

In addition to trail development, the GGTA and DNR plan to host volunteer trail maintenance projects this year. If you have an interest in helping, please watch for more information on the website and on Facebook, and in your email box.

~*Oliver Liu*

DNR Area Specialist &
GGST Trail Coordinator

Executive Director's Report

We've made it to a new year and a new decade, and we look in two directions: in the handlebar mirror at past events and accomplishments, and at the trail ahead, envisioning what this year—and this decade—will bring.

Much of last year was devoted to planning and organizing. The GGTA was awarded a Minnesota's Lake Superior Coastal Program grant to work with a landscape architect on pre-design and alignment of a new trail segment from the Ski Hill Road to the town of Lutsen. The trail extension is part of a community planning project undertaken in Lutsen last year, in which the GGTA participated. The project also envisions a trailhead/wayside at the intersection of Hwy 61 and Ski Hill Road, and implementation of design concepts for the town center. We were delighted to learn during the process that residents of Lutsen view this new segment of trail as its prospective town "sidewalk"—a safe place for residents, business owners, employees, guest workers, and visitors to walk and bike to the town's businesses and other amenities. Of course, it will also be a gateway to the GGST, connecting the Lutsen town center to the ski hill, the golf course, the Poplar River, the Onion River, Tofte, Temperance River State Park, the Superior Hiking

Trail, and Schroeder. We also learned that there is significant support for extending the trail beyond Lutsen's town center to the Caribou trail, and we hope to obtain additional funding for this purpose. You can read more about Lutsen's exciting planning process at ardc.org/lutsendesignproject.

In the 2020 legislative session, we will also seek bonding funds for two pre-construction projects: design and engineering of a trail segment connecting Two Harbors to Flood Bay State Wayside, and a trail extension from Silver Bay to Tettegouche State Park. Please ask your legislators to support our request!

In August, we celebrated our 19th Annual North Shore Bike Ride. Dan Young was one of 130+ riders on a PERFECT North Shore day. Dan (pictured with me) and his wife Silva (a rest stop volunteer) are



long-time GGTA supporters, whose generous donations are matched by Dan's employer. Join us on August 15th to celebrate our 20th Annual Ride!

~*Michelle Pierson*

GGTA Executive Director

Your Membership Dollars at Work!

The Gitchi-Gami Trail Association is a small 501(c)(3) nonprofit with a very modest budget. The vast majority of our contributions come from individual and family memberships, business memberships, and small donations that pay for the day-to-day operation of the GGTA.

Members sometimes make additional donations to the GGTA, filling out a line on the form that says "For trail maintenance." At our Annual North Shore Bike Ride this past August, our friends from ARDC piloted a new project. The agency, with support from MnDOT, assembled a special bicycle to assist with collecting trail condition data. The bicycle is an e-bike with a motor and rechargeable battery pack, which can help a cyclist maintain a steady speed. The e-bike is pedal assist, giving a cyclist a boost when going up hills. When a cyclist is going downhill and braking, it helps recharge the battery. In addition to a sweet ride, the bike is equipped with several pieces of equipment to help collect data. Mounted on the back rack, positioned to face down behind the bike, is a GoPro camera, which takes a still photo every few seconds. These stills offer views of actual pavement conditions. Also mounted on the back of the bicycle is a monopod equipped with a 360-degree camera. This

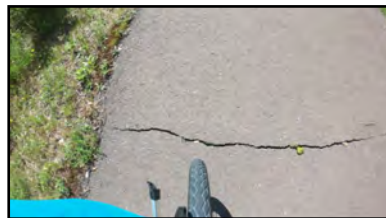
camera can show obstacles, trees, and surrounding areas and is also set to take photos every few seconds. Lastly, mounted on the bike is an iPhone, which runs an app that uses the phone's gyroscopes to graph representations of trail conditions. So if the bike bounces—for example, over a pothole or a crack—it registers a blip on a graph (similar to a seismology graph). Use of this "data bike" during our Annual Ride revealed that while most of our trail is in

good condition, there are some areas of concern. When we compared the graph to the photos, we could see that it is time for some trail maintenance. The DNR has two crack sealers that are employed across the state. The data bike evidence inspired the DNR to dispatch a crew to crack-seal the GGST this spring, so we can keep our hard-earned trail miles in great shape.

This is where you come in. The GGTA has pledged \$2000 to support the DNR's efforts to seal our trail. We are happy to be able to share the contributions you earmarked for trail maintenance for just that!

Your GGTA membership and extra contributions really do matter. Thank you for all you do to further our mission to help build, promote, and maintain the GGST!

~ Chad Pierson
GGTA Treasurer



Gitchi-Gami Trail Association
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Two Harbors, MN 55616

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A Trail to Adventure

What do you get when you combine a teacher who moonlights as a bike mechanic, a trail association with an idea, and a Youth Engagement grant opportunity from the Parks & Trails Council of MN? The answer is: One Epic Fieldtrip!

Fifteen students in Mr. Jacobs's 5th grade class at William Kelley School biked 19.3 miles on the GGST from their school to Split Rock Lighthouse State Park—and back! While at the park, they engaged in hands-on science lessons from DNR staff and enjoyed a delicious lunch.

The P&TC grant also made it possible to purchase three good quality bikes and four helmets—the foundation for William Kelley's new bicycle fleet.

See more of the 5th graders' #TrailTale story on our Facebook page!



TRAIL tales



GITCHI-GAMI
STATE TRAIL

Gitchi-Gami Trail Association

1130 Eleventh Street
Two Harbors, MN 55616

Mark your calendars!

GGTA Annual Meeting—Saturday, May 30th, in conjunction with Spokengear/Cedar Coffee Company Bike Expo and Gear Swap.

20th Annual North Shore Bike Ride—Saturday, August 15th. Details and online registration available soon.

Join or renew your membership—act soon! Simply fill out the included envelope, OR go online to the Membership page on our website, www.ggta.org. Remember, if you join the GGTA now, you will get the members-only discount for the annual ride!