



# GITCHI-GAMI TRAIL RIDER

A publication of the Gitchi-Gami Trail Association

Fall 2018

## President's Message

### STEP BY STEP, FOOT BY FOOT, PEDAL BY PEDAL



*The foot feels the foot  
when it feels the ground. . .*

*E. Wood, Zen Dictionary*

*. . . or when the foot feels a  
bike pedal! We are happy to  
report that construction  
season 2018 has resulted in  
additional trail; and though  
we count those segments by*

*the foot, and not the mile, they are still significant.*

If you've traveled through the Town of Tofte lately, you may have noticed big changes in the parking area near the Coho Café; and as the summer days progressed, you could watch the emergence of an extension of the trail. Measuring just over 1000 feet, this new piece of trail is just a beginning: it is the first 1000 steps to closing the mile-long gap in the trail through Tofte. Check out the next page and our Facebook page to see pics of the new trail segment. The DNR has submitted an engineering request to begin the planning process to design the remainder of the gap through Tofte.

Major trail maintenance projects completed this season included the replacement of a culvert near Cobblestone Cabins northeast of Tofte, and trail patching in Temperance River State Park.

In the coming months, a collaborative planning project will be undertaken in the Town of Lutsen that will impact the trail. As you may know, the DNR was awarded a Transportation Alternatives grant to build a 1.5-mile trail extension from the current terminus at Ski Hill Road/Hwy 61 into Lutsen town center. Early next year, township

officials, business owners, the North Shore Scenic Drive Council, and the DNR will begin a public input process to consider aesthetic design, trail planning, and development of a potential wayside. The trail construction project is scheduled for 2021, and we look forward to interacting with all stakeholders about this potential trail corridor and its benefits for trail users, community members who reside or work in Lutsen, and North Shore visitors. Keep an eye on our Facebook page where we'll post meeting notices and project updates.

With one eye on the far horizon, let's take a step back together to recognize other notable trail events this past summer and fall. We'd like to thank all who joined us on August 18th, a beautiful day on the shore, for our Annual GGTA North Shore Bike Ride. Our deep gratitude also goes out to our business sponsors and ride volunteers who make such a celebration of the trail possible. We hope you'll mark your calendars and plan to join us for next year's ride on Saturday, August 17th.

Looking to the near horizon, we anticipate the kickoff of long-awaited trail construction that will connect the City of Grand Marais to Cut Face Creek State Wayside. After lively public discussion of the planned corridor, the DNR has mapped a beautiful route along the lake that will provide access to heretofore nearly inaccessible natural features and vistas. We will continue to help the DNR seek funding for further trail development and maintenance of the trail we have today. And we hope to catch you out on the trail!

*~ Tom Peterson, GGTA President*



## A GGTA Farewell to our DNR Trail Development Specialist

Leaves are falling along the trail corridor, and daylight hours are waning. Autumn is a time for change, and we at the GGTA want to recognize a change in trail leadership at the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources.

Mark Rudningen has held a variety of positions at the DNR, and he has served as the Development Specialist for the Gitchi-Gami State Trail for more than six years. We've come to appreciate Mark's true concern for the condition of the trail and his sincere hope that every trail user has a great experience. Mark can often be found checking on the trail, helping with repairs, hanging up signs, developing maps, assisting with grant applications, and more.

Although Mark is leaving the North Shore, he will continue working with the DNR; in fact, his next path brings him full circle. Growing up, he'd watch his father get ready for work and often thought his dad

In Mark's first position as a Buildings and Grounds staffer at Cuyuna Country State Recreation Area, he was involved in the establishment of that park's renowned mountain bike system. There he worked with trail friends' groups and came to appreciate the need to connect people with nature by bicycle.

In Mark's next position, he will serve as Parks Specialist, where he'll have the opportunity to engage with park visitors and trail lovers at Crow Wing State Park, Charles Lindberg State Park, and Cuyuna.



Ribbon-cutting for new Beaver Bay-Silver Bay gap connection trail.

Mark reports that his time working on the Gitchi-Gami Trail has been rewarding and challenging. He said the proudest moment in his career with the DNR was this past spring's ribbon-cutting for the new Beaver Bay-Silver Bay trail connection. Seeing a project come together—meeting with the public, engaging governmental bodies and officials, seeking funding, preparing environmental assessments, following construction progress alongside contractors, and ultimately closing the West Road trail gap—took years. Having played a role in seeing that gap finally closed fills Mark with pride. He notes that building the GGST is challenging, but he knows that connections the trail forges between communities, linking some of our state's most amazing places, is important work.

Mark says that he'll miss views from the trail of the sun cresting over Lake Superior, but that he's looking forward to new (but familiar) horizons. And so we say "so long" to Mark, and wish him happy trails. Until we meet again.

*~Michelle Pierson, GGTA Executive Director*



GGTA's Michelle Pierson, DNR's Mark Rudningen, at the annual ride.

had the best job in the world. Mark's father, Win Rudningen, served as Park Manager at Crow Wing State Park. Mark grew up there among the trees, hiking around Chippewa Rifle Pits, and fishing from the shore near Frank Kape's cabin. He walked trails, looked over lakes, and explored a natural playground. He has carried that sense of adventure into the positions he has held at the DNR.



New trail extension in Tofte by Waters Edge Trading Company, Coho Café, and Visitor Center/Fishing Museum. (Photos by Greg Fangel)

***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 association. These contributions permit us to promote and advocate for the trail and communicate with supporters and stakeholders, such as in this newsletter.

From time to time, people make additional contributions to their membership dues, filling out a line on the form that says “For trail maintenance.” This year we have been privileged to pass along your donations to significantly help the DNR and MnDOT with costs of maintenance and wayfinding.

Traveling the North Shore Scenic Drive (Hwy 61) between Gooseberry Falls and Split Rock Lighthouse State Parks, you may have missed the turnoff to one of my personal favorite North Shore sweet spots—Iona’s Beach Scientific and Natural Area/Twin Points. This important state wayside includes a protected boat ramp and “safe harbor,” walking trails along the shore, and access to the beautiful SNA with its pink

rhyolite beach. It also serves as a trailhead for the Gitchi-Gami State Trail—a great place for a rest or to launch a family ride to either state park.

Thanks to your donations, you likely won’t miss the turnoff anymore—due to the large new highway signs listing all of the amenities at this wayside. The GGTA was able to contribute \$1,000 toward the purchase of these new signs. We look forward to continuing to work with the DNR and MnDOT to improve signage that highlights our trail.

This summer the GGTA was also able to assist the DNR with the purchase of a mower attachment that trims completely around fence posts (search for “fence post mower” on YouTube to see one of these tools in action). The mower attachment saves valuable staff

hours previously spent on weed whipping, and so extends the trail maintenance budget and will help preserve fencing and keep the trail looking good for many years to come.

So you can see that your membership and extra contributions really do matter! Thank you for all you do to further the GGTA’s mission to help build, promote, and maintain the Gitchi-Gami State Trail.

*~ Chad Pierson, GGTA Treasurer*



Top: New highway sign at Twin Points. Below: DNR’s new fence post mower.

**Gitchi-Gami Trail Association**

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**Bike it. Hike it. Like it. Support it!**

Are you one of the generous Minnesotans who donate to your favorite causes on “Give to the Max Day”—November 15 this year—maybe doing all your year-end charitable donations that day? Please consider adding a GGTA membership contribution to your donation list. You can access our GiveMN page by searching for “ggta” at the “donate” link on the website, [www.givemn.org](http://www.givemn.org).

**OR** you can send your contribution in the envelope enclosed in this newsletter. **OR** you can go online to the Membership page on our website, [www.ggta.org](http://www.ggta.org). Remember, **if you join the GGTA or renew your membership now, you will get the members-only discount for next year’s annual ride!**

**AND**, if you’re a business, please consider a **business membership!** Your support will be recognized in our publications, on our website, and in our all ride publicity.

**All memberships and contributions are tax-deductible!** Help us to continue to advocate for and build a great trail on a Great Lake!



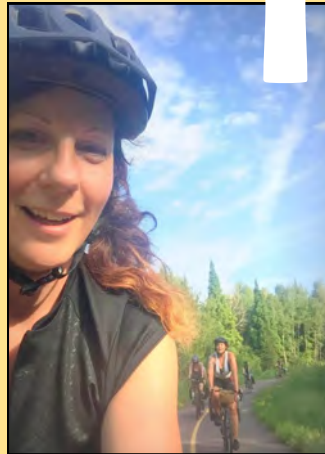


### A Trail to Adventure

Kim Boustead reached out to us this summer ahead of a bike packing trip she and some pals were planning, from Duluth to Canada. We offered suggestions and sent links to our interactive map and other important information (like where to get a great slice of pie). Kim got back in touch with us to tell us how the trip went. This is what she had to say:

*Six friends, all women. Three days of self-supported biking, camping, exploring the shore. Connecting. Appreciating trail developed and hopeful for trail miles to come. 176 miles were pedaled. One ambulance ride (read: former ambulance, now Fireweed Bike Coop support vehicle). Two countries. Countless memories, infinite wonder.*

Find Kim's entire #TrailTale on our Facebook page!



# TRAIL tales



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remember the GGTA when you  
**give** TO THE **MAX**   
 NOV. 15, 2018