

# GITCHI-GAMI TRAIL RIDER

A publication of the Gitchi-Gami Trail Association

Fall 2022



Photo: Paul Sundberg



## “ON YOUR LEFT!”

Full is in the air once again, and we find ourselves reflecting upon a remarkable 2022 cycling season.

We celebrated the new Grand Marais to Cut Face Creek State Wayside segment of trail in June with a well-attended ribbon cutting. This new gem on the shore is already seeing a lot of use and offers some good reminders. The trail is often busy not only with bikers, but also with people walking their dogs, parents jogging alongside their preschoolers on tricycles and training-wheeled bikes, kids (and adults) on scooters, rollerbladers and roller skiers, and, increasingly, riders on e-bikes. In short, it seems like the popularity of this new trail segment continues to prove the expression “If you build it, they will come.”

We know that this busy five-mile stretch of trail is not only popular with visitors to the North Shore, but is also already beloved by locals. My wife and I have joined the ranks of e-bike riders, and that has helped me learn more about e-bikes, and about trail etiquette and regulations. Did you know that, as a bike rider, it’s not only the polite thing to do, it’s state law that we wait until it’s safe to pass, and then give an audible

warning to pedestrians and other trail users? You could use your bike bell (ding, ding!), or call out “On your left!” to let others ahead know of your intent to pass.

We are thrilled that numbers recorded on trail sensors show that more than 200 people per day used this new stretch of trail during the summer. As we are out enjoying the trail features, spectacular views, and rugged shoreline, let’s all remember to follow the rules, be mindful of other trail users, keep our pets on leashes, and pack out what we pack in, so that we can all enjoy this great trail!\*

~Bruce Martinson,  
GGTA President



Bruce e-biking the new trail

\* A list of rules and regulations regarding trail use can be found at [www.mndnr.gov/trailrules](http://www.mndnr.gov/trailrules).



## Trail Coordinator's Report

First and foremost, long overdue thanks to you for supporting the Gitchi-Gami State Trail! Thank you for your continued involvement with the GGST, whether you are someone who advocates for trail funding and development, or who supports non-motorized and accessible trails, or who simply enjoys the trail and communicates your enthusiasm to others. At the numerous public meetings and community events I attend, I frequently make reference to the fact that the GGST would not exist if not for the dedication and historical efforts made by members of the public, both denizens and visitors to the North Shore. At its best, public lands reflect our greatest societal ideals—that we should preserve our natural lands and offer ways to sustainably enjoy them. The GGST offers a means to achieve these ideals and more, making important physical connections between our shared public lands, community and town centers, and local businesses and schools. What's been accomplished has been extraordinary as trail use continues to expand, as does public interest in learning about the trail. Please continue to advocate for and share your knowledge of the GGST with others.

Moving on to what's been accomplished this year and what's coming up next for the GGST: Regular maintenance, including crack-sealing and small pavement repairs, took place on the trail segments in Schroeder-Tofte and Beaver Bay to Split Rock Lighthouse State Park. Other projects planned before the end of the year include refreshing the trail striping and pavement markers, and trail brushing that will continue this fall and winter to widen the trail shoulders and remove obstructions.

The second phase of Lutsen trail development will begin this fall and winter, starting with vegetation clearing for the trail alignment. This new segment of trail will connect the existing trail that now terminates at Ski Hill Road with the Lutsen town center. The project is anticipated to be completed sometime in 2023. This project is largely funded with Federal Transportation Alternatives dollars.

Finally, project planning and coordination with MnDOT continues for the Two Harbors to Flood Bay trail segment, which is currently slated to begin sometime in 2024 and which is also partially funded with Transportation Alternatives dollars. More information is coming about both of these projects, so stay tuned!

~Oliver Liu, MnDNR -GGST Coordinator



## Executive Director's Report

The leaves on trees along the North Shore are showing off the beauty in letting go. It's incredible to be on the trail this time of year, smiling at other trail users you meet along the way.

In 2022, we again look over our lists and notice that there are certainly many items on our "things to celebrate" list, while our "to-do" list continues to grow. The 22nd Annual North Shore Bike Ride was a great success. We are thankful to the volunteers, business sponsors, and riders who make this annual event an opportunity to talk about the trail, and "crowdsource" ideas about how to best support its future.

I often say I should work on cheek calisthenics before Ride Day; I do so much talking and smiling that I come away from the event with sore smiling muscles. It is fun to see so many return riders and catch up with families with growing kids. Kids marching towards adulthood is a subject I am VERY familiar with. As you can see in the photograph, a part of our Ride Day volunteer cadre gets bigger, smarter, and stronger every year. I love sharing this day with the whole family, and my daughters are looking at other ways they can help support the trail; they say they might even start a Gitchi-Gami Trail Association Instagram page. Stay tuned!

Once again, we supported the William Kelley 5th graders with a class field trip on the trail this fall. It is amazing to see the sense of accomplishment the students have after cycling almost 20 miles, using the trail as a classroom.



The Piersons working at the Annual Ride

High on our to-do list is securing funding for trail projects. We were disappointed that the Legislature adjourned without considering GGST bonding requests: funding for trail construction projects in Lutsen and Tofte, for leveraging federal funds for new trail from Two Harbors to Flood Bay, and for design and engineering of an alignment from Silver Bay to Tettegouche State Park. But we won't give up! Please consider reaching out to your newly elected and reelected senators and representatives when the Legislature reconvenes, to tell them that the GGST is a valuable state resource, worthy of funding.

And you can also support this effort by contributing to the GGTA, as we continue to work with state agencies, communities, interest groups, and others in the planning, promotion, and funding of the trail. **A good day to do that is November 17, "Give to the Max Day."** Please consider adding the GGTA to the list of nonprofits to which you donate. Click on the logo on our Facebook page or website, or search for the GGTA on the Give to the Max website, [www.givemn.org](http://www.givemn.org). Many thanks, and, as always, Happy Trails!

~Michelle Pierson, GGTA Executive Director

## Remembering Tom Peterson

This summer, the GGTA mounted a plaque in memory of Tom Peterson on a bench overlooking Lake Superior, adjacent to the Twin Points parking area, on Highway 61 between Two Harbors and Silver Bay. Tom, known as “the father of the Superior Hiking Trail,” died suddenly the previous summer, and his loss is felt by all who knew and admired him.

While growing up in Minneapolis, Tom and his family frequented the North Shore. He was thrilled to be able to put his education to use teaching philosophy at the University of Minnesota Duluth, and he lived for the remainder of his life in the north woods. In time, he found his true calling as an employee of the MN Department of Natural Resources. He and his wife Sherry and daughter Jessica enjoyed life in their “work-in-progress” cabin outside of Two Harbors.

Among other duties at the DNR, Tom assisted in the development of trail systems along the shore and through the Superior National Forest, including the North Shore Trail. Most notably, “on loan” to the Superior Hiking Trail, he laid out the first 200+ miles, always looking for the most stunning overlooks, beautiful creek crossings, and natural features. He once said it was his “dream job”—“I get paid to walk around in the woods.” Many who attended his memorial in Two Harbors last summer delighted in working with him. Others were lifelong friends from as far back as high school and college. All described his joy at spending time in the forest and on the lakeshore, where he continued his forays in retirement with beloved dog Abby.

In his last decade, he served on the GGTA board—two years as president. The memorial plaque we placed at Twin Points honors all of his life’s work as a “trailblazer” and treasured friend. For the foreseeable future, and for generations to come, his contributions to the North Shore and the Superior National Forest will continue to enrich the lives of residents and visitors who might never know his name but will know his legacy.

~ Anne McKinsey



Iconic photo of Tom, mapping and flagging the route of the Superior Hiking Trail through the forest, with compass and USGS map in hand (and no GPS or GoogleEarth in the 1980s).



Plaque honoring Tom and his contributions to the trail complex on the North Shore and through the Superior National Forest, mounted on a bench on a bluff overlooking Lake Superior, at the Twin Points wayside and water access—a parking area for the GGTA and Iona’s Beach Scientific and Natural Area.

### Gitchi-Gami Trail Association

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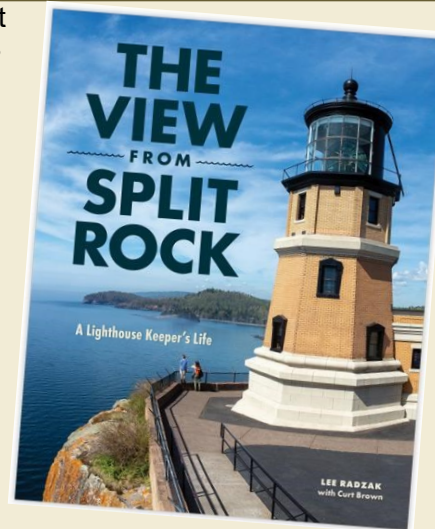
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Can you imagine being a lighthouse keeper? A lonely life, you might think. But for Lee Radzak, who accepted the job of keeper of Split Rock Lighthouse as an employee of the MN Historical Society in 1982, life was intensely exciting, challenging, and rewarding—but hardly lonely! Lee lived with his family in one of the three keepers' houses at the site for 36 years, charged with maintaining the light and surrounding structures and welcoming several million visitors as historical site manager. Lee and his wife Jane raised two children and several golden retrievers during those decades living on the cliff overlooking Lake Superior. He wrote about his experiences in his 2021 memoir, *The View from Split Rock: A Lighthouse Keeper's Life*. The book details his encounters with storms, wildlife, thieves, massive waves, home repair issues, and challenging winters. The history of the light and its keepers is highlighted, as well as the mechanics of the beacon. It is illustrated with stunning photos taken by Lee and others. Lee recounts his involvement with the North Shore community over the years, including his participation in the founding of both the Superior Hiking Trail and the GGST, and his instituting, in 1985, the annual lighting of the beacon in memory of the crew of the *Edmund Fitzgerald*. It's a great book to keep on your coffee table, to pick up and read like a collection of fascinating short stories.



~ Anne McKinsey



In 2002, with Lee's assistance, Congressman Jim Oberstar, avid cyclist and champion of the GGST, cut the ceremonial ribbon to open the first actual mile of paved trail and launch the second annual trail ride. (No trail had been completed in 2001, when the newly formed association sponsored the first ride on local roads.) Lee was among the original group of visionaries who formed the organization that became the GGTA. He served on the board, including as its president, until 2009, proudly working on the (challenging) trail section routed through Split Rock Lighthouse State Park.



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