



**WEST MICHIGAN  
TRAILS & GREENWAYS**  
COALITION



VOLUME 6, ISSUE 2 • SPRING 2020

# TRAIL LINK

NEWSLETTER OF WEST MICHIGAN TRAILS & GREENWAYS COALITION

**TRAIL LINK** is the newsletter of the West Michigan Trails & Greenways Coalition, published four times annually. Established in 2005, the West Michigan Trails & Greenways Coalition is a grassroots group of individuals committed to developing a non-motorized trail system connecting our communities and rural areas and providing alternative transportation and recreation options to West Michigan residents and visitors.

Executive Director:  
**John Morrison**

Development Coordinator:  
**Jennifer Antel**

Board of Directors  
Executive Committee:  
**Aaron Bodbyl-Mast**, chair  
**Chris Zull**, vice chair  
**Roger Tuuk**, secretary/treasurer

Trustees:  
**John Arendshorst**  
**David Hall**  
**Larry Hummel**  
**Dale Manske**  
**Scott Post**

**West Michigan Trails & Greenways Coalition**  
1345 Monroe Ave NW, Ste 220  
Grand Rapids, MI 49505  
**Web site:** [www.wmtrails.org](http://www.wmtrails.org)  
**Email:** [info@wmtrails.org](mailto:info@wmtrails.org)



West Michigan Trails & Greenways Coalition

## TRAILS, A SAFE HAVEN

The typical spring routine of getting outside to our favorite places has taken on a new meaning this year. With COVID-19, parks and trails have become a universal respite from isolation. It's not just anecdotal either - Google Mobility Data (<https://www.google.com/covid19/mobility/>) shows tremendous increases in parks usage in West Michigan as the weather warmed up and the Stay at Home order went in place.

We are fortunate in West Michigan to have so many great trails to escape to - and the West Michigan Trails & Greenways Coalition is proud to have played a part in building our trail system. However, we knew before this happened that more trails are needed, trails could be a better experience, and, in the long-run, trail operators need help to keep the trails open and beautiful.

Our vision is to create a world-class trail system. We have made great progress; but in order to achieve our vision we need to complete trail connections and ensure that everyone has equitable access to trails! Please consider a donation (<https://bit.ly/givewmtgc>) to help us make that possible.

Speaking of those connections, you will read updates about a couple of trails that are very important to me personally - the North Bank Trail and the Spoonville Trail - both of which WMTGC helped to make happen. Later this year, these two trails will connect. It took years and a ton of pain and effort to reach this point. This past weekend my family and I walked a newly paved section of the North Bank Trail - which I have waited years to do. It is a reminder to me that trails aren't just gravel and asphalt mini-roadways. Getting out to walk and ride trails that are special to us is an almost spiritual experience, a chance to slow down and connect to our world and to each other. Along the new section of trail, there are a few quiet, peaceful ponds I had noticed when I had walked it years before, knowing that this would be the future route. At that time, I thought how I couldn't wait for others to be able to experience what I was experiencing at that moment.

What a feeling to have that finally happen.

*Aaron*





**WMTGC is looking to make sure we have an accurate list of our members.**

If you consider yourself a member of WMTGC, please respond by June 30 in one of these ways:

- Filling out this form  
<https://bit.ly/WMTGCMembership>
- Email [Jennifer@wmtrails.org](mailto:Jennifer@wmtrails.org)
- Return the enclosed envelope and check the box  
☐ I want to be considered a Member of WMTGC

## 2020 HAS BEEN A HARD YEAR ...

for people, for businesses, for organizations, for our country, and for the world. Like so many others, West Michigan Trails & Greenways Coalition entered the year with specific goals in mind, and almost all of that has changed in one way or another. Events have been cancelled or delayed, including important fundraisers for WMTGC. Program goals have been adjusted for today's world with some objectives being held off for now.

Staff is working from home and through hard work and planning we've been fortunate to avoid layoffs or reduced hours. Amid the chaos, we're grateful to be where we are, to have received operations grants and funds from the payroll protection program. I am confident WMTGC will continue to rise to the challenge, survive, and remain committed to our work toward a world-class trail system in West Michigan.

While our current position is good, our monthly donors have become more important than ever – especially with the revenue shortfall from fundraising events and sponsorships. Please consider joining WMTGC's monthly donors and help ensure a world-class trail system in West Michigan. You can enroll to be a monthly donor – WMTGC's Trail Ambassador program – at <https://bit.ly/giveWMTGC>.

Stay safe and enjoy the great trails West Michigan has to offer. Remember to practice good social distancing, carry in your own water and hand sanitizer, and avoid benches and areas where groups may form. And please stay home if you exhibit any symptoms of illness. Let's keep the trails a safe and wonderful place for all of us!

*John*

John Morrison, Executive Director WMTGC



## BE A WMTGC TRAIL AMBASSADOR!

WMTGC Trail Ambassadors make a big difference – a little at a time. Once a month, to be exact! As a Trail Ambassador you provide a sustainable source of support for programming and work toward a world-class trail system in West Michigan. Whether you are an annual donor or are considering supporting WMTGC for the first time, please consider becoming a Trail Ambassador as a monthly donor. For as little as \$5 a month you can make a substantial impact on trails in your own community! There is still so much work to be done.

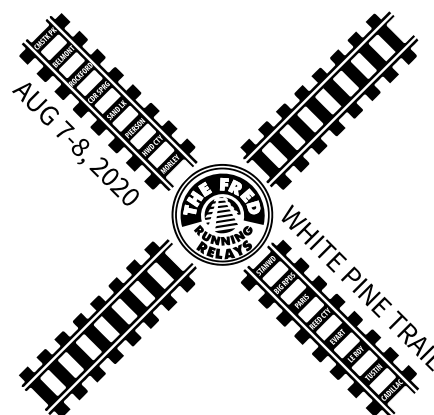
**JOIN US TODAY!** <https://bit.ly/give>



## CHANGES TO THE BEST LAID PLANS

### AUG 07-08 Fred Running Relays 2020

The 10th Annual Fred Running Relays are scheduled for August 7-8, 2020. The 50- to 200-mile relays take place on the White Pine Trail between Belmont and Cadillac. WMTGC is closely monitoring the social distancing requirements and will make decisions based on what is safest for the runners and volunteers. If the races must be cancelled due to Covid19, all registration fees (minus the small transaction fee) will be refunded, or teams can choose to transfer 100% of their team registration to 2021. For more information go to <http://bit.ly/fredrelay> or contact [Jennifer@wmtrails.org](mailto:Jennifer@wmtrails.org).





# PURE MICHIGAN TRAILS & TRAILTOWNS

We're all familiar with Michigan's popular Pure Michigan campaign to promote the wonderful destinations and attractions our beautiful state has to offer. With Michigan also being known as a trail state with more rail-to-trail miles than any other state, it stands to reason that the Pure Michigan campaign would want to promote the excellent trails within our borders, leading to the creation of the Pure Michigan Trails and Pure Michigan Trailtowns program. The program set criteria the trails and towns must meet in order to obtain the designation assuring the highest quality experience for residents and visitors.

As such, the Kal-Haven Trail State Park has been designated as a Pure Michigan Trail. The Kal-Haven Trail is a 33-mile former railroad that links the city of South Haven to the city of Kalamazoo. This limestone trail is popular among bicyclists, runners, and walkers as it crosses over bridges and passes through small towns.

To help you enjoy points of interest along the way, the Friends of the Kal-Haven Trail have launched a new mobile app to enhance the Heritage Trail project installed in 2019.

The app works with your device's GPS signal to alert you when you're near a heritage panel along the trail. You can find the app in the Google Play store: just search "Kal Haven". You can also find an attendant web link for Apple and desktop machines at: <https://iwr.msu.edu/kht/>

Reed City is known as Michigan's Crossroads, where two of Michigan's mightiest trails intersect: the Fred Meijer White Pine Trail State Park and the Pere Marquette State



Trail. The city is a popular destination to base day or weeklong trips.

"Reed City has long recognized the importance of trails and can boast about paving part of Pere Marquette back in 1984. With the new Trailtown designation and support from Pure Michigan, we will be able to fold that into our Economic Development strategy and maximize the Crossroads of trails in Reed City to the benefit of our residents and local merchants" explained Ron M. Howell, City Manager.

With its designation in February, Reed City is recognized as one of the best Trailtowns in the state. Reed City joins other Trailtowns, including Charlevoix, Houghton, South Haven, and the Village of Newberry.

PURE MICHIGAN<sup>®</sup>  
TRAIL

TRAILTOWN  
of PURE MICHIGAN<sup>®</sup>

## CHANGES TO THE BEST LAID PLANS *continued*

### SEP 2020 WMTGC Trail Mixer

WMTGC's Trail Mixer has been moved from June to September 2020. The Trail Mixer is a fun showcase for what's going on in the West Michigan trail world, a look at what WMTGC is working on, and a fundraiser for driving forward the WMTGC mission of a world-class trail system in West Michigan. For more information on sponsorship opportunities or attending, please watch our website at [wmtrails.org](http://wmtrails.org) or please email Jennifer at [Jennifer@wmtrails.org](mailto:Jennifer@wmtrails.org).

### AUG 2021 MATAG Conference 2021

The Mid America Trails And Greenways (MATAG) Conference in Grand Rapids has been rescheduled for August 15-18, 2021. In its place this year, look for a MATAG Virtual mini conference the morning of Tuesday, August 18, 2020 where panelists will discuss responses and best practices learned in trail use around the COVID-19 outbreak, as well as a taste of what to expect at the 2021 conference. Watch for more MATAG details at [matag.org](http://matag.org). Partners hosting the MATAG conference include WMTGC, Michigan Trails and Greenways Alliance, and mParks.



While it seems like much of the world has stopped moving, 2020 is actually seeing a lot of progress and maintenance on area trails. Here are several projects to be completed this summer:

### FRED MEIJER MILLENNIUM PARK TRAILS

The well along the trail at Millenium Park has been plugged successfully and the Kent Trail is back open. The access road, that was built for the project, is being removed so the natural trails will still be closed and the fencing will be up to keep the site secure. Truck traffic will temporarily increase on Kent Trails as they haul the fill off-site. Flaggers will be on site for safety when trucks are present.

The fence sections will remain in place, temporarily, with the gates tied open, but the paved trail will remain open.

### IDEMA EXPLORERS TRAIL

The Idema Explorers Trail is part of Ottawa County Parks' Grand River Greenway, a long-term effort to create a model ecological and cultural multi-use corridor along the Grand River. The Greenway preserves significant natural, historical, and cultural features and promotes healthier, happier, and more vibrant communities. The 37-mile trail will connect numerous greenway parks on the south side of the Grand River in Ottawa County as well as connect Grand Haven to Grand Rapids. The next section being constructed this summer is 0.9-miles connecting the existing trail on 10th Avenue in Georgetown Township to the Bend Area Open Space (which is managed by Ottawa County Parks) on 12th Avenue. The goal is for these sections to connect to the Kent Trails system in 2021. For more information, please visit [grandrivergreenway.org](http://grandrivergreenway.org).



Photo by Lee Koets, courtesy of Ottawa County Parks

### FRED MEIJER FLAT RIVER VALLEY AND GRAND RIVER VALLEY RAIL-TRAIL

Long awaited, construction on the Flat River Valley and Grand River Valley rail trails is expected to finish in the coming weeks with final details like signs and benches being installed this summer. With the exception of a couple miles in Lowell being organized by LARA (Lowell Area Recreation Authority), this completes 125 miles of continuous non-motorized trail from Alma to Edmore to Greenville to Lowell, and then east to Owosso.

It's worth noting that the sections being completed this year are using crushed asphalt which is promising to be a great new surface for non-motorized trails at a cost effective price point.

### SPOONVILLE TRAIL

The second phase of the Spoonville Trail in Ottawa County is scheduled to start in late May with construction running through October. Completing Spoonville as well as the North Bank Trail (see above) closes the gap between the Idema Explorers Trail and the North Bank, important steps in creating a beautiful and scenic loop from Grand Haven to Nunica to Spring Lake and back to Grand Haven. If you haven't been on the Spoonville, you'll want to check out the view as it crosses the Grand River on the protected path over the M-231 bridge.





## NORTH BANK TRAIL

The North Bank Trail heads east out of Spring Lake along an abandoned rail bed and will ultimately connect to the Musketawa Trail. Phase two of the North Bank Trail is being paved this summer from 130th Avenue where it ended with phase one and takes it into Nunica where it will connect with the Spoonville Trail. A ribbon cutting is tentatively planned for later this summer.



## FRED MEIJER PIONEER TRAIL

Construction of the final phase of the Fred Meijer Pioneer Trail is about to begin! Once completed this summer, the Fred Meijer White Pine Trail State Park will connect seamlessly via the Pioneer Trail to the Musketawa Trail all the way to Muskegon! Think about it: that's Cadillac to Grand Rapids to Muskegon all on non-motorized trail! The new section connects the White Pine at North Park and West River Drive to the existing Pioneer Trail at Lankamp and West River Drive.

## FRED MEIJER M-6 TRAIL MAINTENANCE

The M-6 trail paving and repair project between Kalamazoo Avenue and Wing Avenue is tentatively on the schedule for June 10 and 11. The trail will be closed during construction.

**SHARE THE TRAIL**

Practice Safe Social Distancing on the Trail

Before you head out, check to ensure the trail is open. Be prepared that trails may have limited services: facilities may be closed, and maintenance and security may be limited or unavailable. Find trail-manager contact info at [TrailLink.com](http://TrailLink.com). Check [coronavirus.gov](http://coronavirus.gov) for the latest public-health guidance.

- On the trail, do not gather in groups.
- Keep 6 feet between you and others at all times.
- Carry water, hand sanitizer and disinfecting wipes to further protect yourself.
- Wash or sanitize your hands frequently.
- Avoid playgrounds or other areas where groups may form.
- Leave any area where you cannot maintain a 6-foot distance.
- Do not touch your face.
- Stay home if you exhibit any symptoms of illness.

Visit [railstotrails.org/COVID19](http://railstotrails.org/COVID19) for resources and information about ways to stay healthy and well during this time of social distancing.

rains-to-trails conservancy



**West Michigan Trails & Greenways Coalition**  
1345 Monroe Ave NW, Suite 220  
Grand Rapids, MI 49505

**WEST MICHIGAN**  
**TRAILS & GREENWAYS**  
COALITION

If you would like to only  
receive a digital form of  
the newsletter, email  
Jennifer@wmtrails.org  
and she will change your  
subscription to e-news only!

Thank you!

## DONOR HIGHLIGHT

### *Group Ride Leader & WMTGC's First Monthly Donor - Michael Roon*

Michael Roon doesn't just enjoy the trails himself, he gets others riding on them too. For 20 years, Michael Roon and his wife, Kimberly, led a Thursday night ride. A group of bikers would head out on the trail, hit up a local beverage stop halfway, and return. Fifty to 60 riders joined them on each ride, introducing them to different trails across West Michigan – from the Musketawa Trail to the Kent Trail.

"We're so blessed to have all these paved trails in West Michigan," says Roon, who has adventured on bike trails across the U.S. and other countries. "People donate a lot of time and energy so that people like me get to ride on the rail trails." He feels that supporting the trails is a way to show appreciation and contribute to the upkeep of the trail system.

Now that he's retired, and his wife will soon be, Roon is starting up a retiree ride every Thursday. "It'll be an ice cream ride – a way to stay fit and have a treat," he says. On each ride, they'll stop at a local hotspot for an ice cream cone. Information for Roon's retiree ride will be posted on the Alger Bikes website (algerbikes.com) sometime this spring or summer.

Besides leading group rides, Roon involves himself with the trails in another way: he's a monthly donor to the WMTGC. In fact, he was the first-ever monthly donor. "If I'm going to use the trails, I want to support them and donate money to the cause," he says. "I love cycling and it's the right thing



to do to help support our trail system. I'm thrilled to be a part of this organization."

Roon says to join him in donating, and always remember to ride safe and wear a helmet.

By contributing to WMTGC, you help develop and maintain the beautiful trail system that connects communities and natural areas across West Michigan.