



WEST MICHIGAN TRAIL LINK

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is the newsletter of West Michigan Trails, published 3-4 times annually. Established in 2005, West Michigan Trails is 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.

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THE TRAILS WE LOVE, LOVE US BACK!

There are so many benefits to Trails.

HEALTH – Trails provide us a safe place to recreate and incorporate exercise in our lives; they also help us get out and enjoy a mental refresh. WMT is working to connect our vast trails to each other and to more communities throughout West Michigan.

TRANSPORTATION – Many Americans are seeking alternative transportation as a way to get to work, school, parks and other resources. A key to making the network user friendly is a signage system that is unified and easy to understand. WMT is developing a signage guidebook as a first step to building a universal signage system throughout our trails.

HISTORIC PRESERVATION & COMMUNITY IDENTITY – trail builders are striving to include more identification of historical places and honor our history.

WMT has played a vital role for over 20 years by championing the ongoing expansion of the regional trail network and ensuring that network reaches all communities. We have served as a bridge between community trail groups and municipalities and organized fundraising efforts to connect trail. As the trail coalition for the region, WMT is uniquely positioned to spearhead trail initiatives across West Michigan.



CONSERVATION & ENVIRONMENT – Trails don't just connect us to the beauty of nature, they help protect it by improving air and water quality by reducing the need for and use of motor vehicles. As we continue to connect the neighborhood trails, we provide more opportunities for

ECONOMY & REVITALIZATION – Location, location, location! Trails are a contributing factor to increased home sales and business and employee retention. WMT helps communities access funding to build, connect, and maintain trails.

While there are hundreds of miles of trails across West Michigan, there are still gaps between neighborhoods, communities, and counties. These gaps limit the use of trails as an active mode of transportation and restrict recreation in some areas. WMT is committed to helping close the gaps by participating in trail-building projects, reaching out to underserved communities, and offering fundraising support to regional groups spearheading this work.

Want to support trails?

Become a supporter at:

<https://bit.ly/WMTSpring2022>



FROM OUR EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, JOHN MORRISON

West Michigan Trails is all about connecting the trails you love. In the beginning, we were about connecting trail managers to help them support each other. Over time we adopted a more direct trail building role and now we are about connecting people to trails, trails to each other, and trails to communities.

We are excited to be partnering with the City of Grand Rapids to make a critical connection within our regional network. This new trail connection will be on the east side of the Grand River between Leonard and Ann Streets, downtown Grand Rapids. This project will fill a gap between the City's River Edges Trail and Riverside Park – making the connection between the City and hundreds of miles of trails in West Michigan.

We are also working with the communities between Kalamazoo and Grand Rapids to build a trail from the northern edge of Kalamazoo County, through Allegan County, and into Kent County. This trail, known as the Interurban trail, will connect those communities to a large network of trails to the north and south. In addition, we are working to get more (or even all) of the White Pine Trail paved. Yes, the White Pine is technically usable already, but paving it will make it accessible to more user groups and be very attractive to cycle tourists.



Beyond construction, West Michigan Trails is hiring a consultant to develop a regional signage plan to connect our trails in new and meaningful ways – like road signage that works across the country. However, in this case, to go from trail to trail.

As a Charity Partner for the Amyway River Bank Run, we are excited to be reaching more of the runners who use the trails to meet up with friends and safely train. Any time of year that you head out on a trail – you will find runners enjoying the beauty and safety you experience on trails.

If you haven't already – join our mailing list (<https://www.wmtrails.org/newsletter>) to be the first to know about new events and connections coming to a trail near you!

MARK YOUR CALENDAR!



WEST MICHIGAN TRAILS CHALLENGE

Love West Michigan Trails? Of more than 60 trails in West Michigan, how many have you visited? We want trail lovers to get out and explore all that Michigan has to offer. Walk, hike, bike, run, skate...whatever your favorite mode of transportation – just get out and explore! It is a challenge to get out, get moving, and check out the trails of West Michigan. Sign up at: <https://bit.ly/WMTGTrailChallenge>.

TRAIL MIXER – THURSDAY, JUNE 23, 2022

Our annual fundraising breakfast will be in-person this year! This fun event is an opportunity to celebrate our accomplishments and share our vision. There is no cost to attend, however, we hope attendees will be compelled to make a donation. For more information or to be a table host, please contact jennifer@wmtrails.org or check it out on our website at wmtrails.org

FRED RELAYS – FRI, AUG 12 TO SAT, AUG 13

Challenge you and your friends this summer with the 50-, 100-, or 200-mile FRED relay race on the White Pine Trail! It's a different kind of race challenge you won't forget or regret. Join us for this great race experience August 12-13, and history tells us you'll be ready to register for next year too! <http://bit.ly/FredRelays2022>



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