



**WEST MICHIGAN
TRAILS & GREENWAYS**
COALITION



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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.

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Development Coordinator:
Jennifer Antel

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West Michigan Trails & Greenways Coalition

NINE-STATE TRAILS CONFERENCE IN GRAND RAPIDS THIS FALL

Hundreds to gather for educational and networking opportunities

By Jenna Jonaitis

For the first time ever, Grand Rapids is hosting the Mid-America Trails And Greenways Conference (MATAG). From across a nine-state region, hundreds will gather for educational opportunities and networking with other happy trail people.

"I'm excited to bring MATAG to Michigan and specifically Grand Rapids," says John Morrison, Executive Director of West Michigan Trails & Greenways Coalition (WMTGC). "We have so much going on here to share." As a proud host, WMTGC will showcase everything from our mountain bike and hiking trails to non-motorized and waterways. There will be optional field trips and 16 different workshop sessions to choose from. *continued inside*



FRIENDS' SUMMIT IS MARCH 21

WMTGC's second annual Friends' Summit is March 21 in Plainwell, the sight of a future River to River Trail connection. Trail users, supporters, enthusiasts, builders, and managers are all invited to attend to discuss trails, network, learn, and share opportunities. Four roundtable sessions include:

- Metrics – How to Do a Trail Count
- Equitable Access & Universal Design
- Low Stress Bike Routes – Mellow Routes
- Trail Maintenance



Please RSVP so we have necessary materials available and enough food. For more information, please contact Jennifer@wmtrails.org.

The event is FREE. Register today: <http://bit.ly/Spring2020Summit>

BOARD HIGHLIGHTS

WMTGC WELCOMES DALE MANSKE TO THE BOARD!

Dale is Director of Finance and Technology for Viking Products, earning his CPA from Western Michigan University. He is an avid cyclist enjoying numerous trails in the region as well as reading a good book. Born in Kalamazoo, Dale grew up in Spring Lake and Grand Haven. With his passion for cycling and 25 years of business consulting he will be an asset to the WMTGC Board. He enjoys giving back to his community and believes trails add to the region by adding tourism, increasing property values, and providing opportunities for healthy living.



Thank
you

The WMTGC Board and staff wants to thank everyone who gave toward our 2019 year-end appeal! Your generous support allows us to continue working toward our mission of a world-class trail system that is accessible to all.

If you would like to donate, there's still much to do! You can donate

- Online at wmtrails.org
- Use the enclosed envelope to make your tax-deductible donation today.

WMTGC'S NEW EXECUTIVE BOARD

Aaron Bodbyl-Mast, Board Chair

Aaron works for Ottawa County Parks & Recreation, has over 15 years experience with planning and recreation, and is passionate that thoughtfully and well-designed recreational facilities can transform a community. Aaron served as project manager on Phase I of the Spoonville Trail in Ottawa County and is now assisting with project management on the Idema Explorers Trail and the Grand Greenway Fundraising Campaign.



Chris Zull, Board Vice-Chair

Chris is a registered professional civil engineer with extensive transportation experience in West Michigan working for Progressive AE as their Transportation Practice Leader. Prior to his current role Chris worked as the Traffic Safety Manager for the City of Grand Rapids for 15 years, having established over 80 miles of on street cycling infrastructure since 2010. His experience with operations, maintenance, and infrastructure provides a valuable perspective for trails and greenways.



Roger Tuuk, Board Secretary/Treasurer

Roger is a retired accountant from The Fremont Area Community Foundation who has been involved in trails for several years and actively involved with the Town & Country Path in Fremont. He has participated in MTGA's Michigander Bicycle Tour for several years which is a top 10 tour in the United States. He also enjoys camping, hiking, kayaking, and bicycling the many trails in Michigan and beyond.



WELCOME SPRINGTIME ON A TRAIL WITH KAL-HAVEN TRAIL BLAZER

Enjoy one of the first rides of spring on the 34-mile Kal-Haven Trail linking Kalamazoo and South Haven. Built on the abandoned Kalamazoo & South Haven Railroad, it offers a compacted limestone/slag surface. Adjoining road routes of 25, 45, 70, and 100 miles are marked for road bikes. Five rest stops are provided along the route. Be sure to stop in Bloomingdale for live music and hot lunch.

Many riders like to bike the Kal-Haven one way, parking at either South Haven or Kalamazoo and taking the early morning shuttle to the opposite staging area to bike back.

The TrailBlazer is hosted by the Friends of the Kal-Haven Trail and the Friends of the Kalamazoo River Valley Trailway. The mission of these groups is to provide support for expansion and maintenance of the trail and continued programming to attract more people to take advantage of this regional resource. WMTGC is a proud sponsor of the TrailBlazer.

For more information: <https://snapregistration.com/e/kalhaven>

Grand Rapids to Host Nine-State Trails Conference - continued from front

"We're also offering optional post-conference workshops that are longer and more in-depth," shares Morrison. The themes stretch across diversity and inclusion, health, and legislative topics. "And, of course, there will be fantastic opportunities to network with similar people."

The 2020 conference is not one to pass up, especially being so close to home. MATAG is only held every other year and hasn't been hosted in Michigan for over 15 years. Top trails-minded professionals from Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Kentucky, Michigan, Minnesota, Missouri, Ohio, and Wisconsin will make the trip.

WMTGC is partnering with mParks (Michigan Recreation & Park Association) and MTGA (Michigan Trails & Greenways Alliance) to host the conference. We're also working with reps from each state, the Rails to Trails Conservancy, and the National Parks Service.

2020 MATAG INFO TO KNOW

WHEN	August 30 – September 2, 2020
WHERE	The Amway Grand Plaza Hotel (Downtown Grand Rapids)
WHO	Trail professionals, developers, and enthusiasts
HOW	Register at MATAG.org in early April

For more information, contact John Morrison at 616-485-7805 or john@wmtrails.org

FRED MEIJER TRAIL CHAMPIONS NOMINATIONS

Fred Meijer was West Michigan's ultimate trail champion. His vision, belief, and support were instrumental to the trail network enjoyed by so many people for recreation, exercise, and transportation. Still, Fred would be the first to recognize that numerous other dedicated individuals and groups also contribute significantly to the development and maintenance of our trails.

For more information, contact us at info@wmtrails.org.

These annual awards honor Fred Meijer's legacy and recognizes the contributions of those individuals and groups. Let the nominations begin!

The categories are:

- Trail Professional
- Trail Volunteer
- Trail Maintenance



WWW.WMTRAILS.ORG – to nominate an individual or organization

200 MILES ON TRAIL IT'S CALLED ... THE FRED

Are you a runner and up for a challenge? How about a 200, 100, or 50 Mile Team Relay on the Fred Meijer White Pine Trail State Park?

Teams with up to 12 runners take turns running "spurs" along the beautiful and serene White Pine Trail. The race begins August 7 in Belmont (or August 8 in Big Rapids for the 50 mile race) and finishes back in Belmont on the 8th with much fanfare, food, and celebration!

WMTGC is thrilled to host this amazing race with all profits funding the development of non-motorized trails in West Michigan. The early-bird registration deadline is Feb 29th.

Contact Jennifer@wmtrails.org for more information.

Get your friends together and sign up today! <https://runsignup.com/Race/MI/Belmont/2018FredRunningrelays>





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DONOR HIGHLIGHT

Huge fan of outdoor exercise - Jason Makowski

Having run the 25K at the 5/3 River Bank Run, Jason Makowski is a huge fan of getting outside to exercise. He first discovered the trails when he noticed people walking, running, and biking down them.

Then he met Jennifer Antel, Development Coordinator of WMTGC, and became even more involved with supporting the trail system. "The trails offer people from all walks of life the opportunity to share and enjoy the beauty and scenery surrounding the trails," shares Makowski.

Want to join Makowski as a donor? Make your tax-deductible gift at:
<http://www.wmtrails.org/Support/Ways-to-Give>

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

**SAVE THE
DATE**

WMTGC's 2nd Annual Trail Mixer is Tuesday, June 16.

Good coffee and a wonderful breakfast will be on hand as trail enthusiasts network and learn about the goals and ambitions of WMTGC's role in West Michigan's trail world. There is no cost to attend this event, but we hope you will be compelled to contribute to support our work.

For more information or event sponsorships, please contact Jennifer Antel at jennifer@wmtails.org