

DECEMBER 2024

# TRAIL TRACKS

Friends of the Fred Meijer Heartland Trail Newsletter  
<https://www.fredmeijerheartlandtrail.org>

## A Letter to the Beavers

Dear Beavers,

When we think of you, we might envision "Busy as a Beaver," and cute little animals swimming around having fun. When in actuality, you can do quite a bit of damage with your craftly dams, causing flooding on the Trail. Pesky beavers, you were active this early spring under the Trail bridge between Cedar Lake and Vestaburg. We asked for help from Ryan Dinehart (Wildlife Specialist USDA) and his Graduate Assistant from MSU, Gabby Nielson. They had two plans. One was to install a "Flow Device" which would carry the water under the dam, and therefore, avoid water back up. Another plan was to trap-tag-release-track you. BUT, in the late spring, you vacated the area! Come this fall, you have moved back, rebuilding the dam, but remain unseen in the cameras. Stay tuned for further developments. . .

A possible second beaver dam could be under the DALMAC bridge, 1.5 miles south of Stanton. The dam has been cleared with help from Trail friend Mike Willard. Although, we are not convinced that this was a recent beaver dam. (Most of the sticks and blockage was quite old then topped off with leaves from the current fall season. Beaver only use live green wood to create dams.). Stay tuned for further developments. . .

Beavers, in the right areas damming can be very beneficial to the environment, but unfortunately next to a bike path, where flooding is a result does not work.....

Busy as a Beaver? You bet!

Sincerely, Larry McKeown



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## Volunteers are the Core of the Trail

by Karen Stearns

Much was done this year on the Trail. A crew of volunteers removed the barriers used to protect the Trail from snowmobiles by February 29, the earliest anyone can recall the Trail being snow-free! The Trail is open year-round for foot traffic such as snowshoeing on the sides of the Trail and cross-country skiing and walking on the Trail.

On April 19, a work crew consisting of Don & Karen Stearns, Drew Vielbig and Brady Friss (both from Ranger Power), Dianne Wilson, Nicki Hansen (not pictured), and Mary Humm scraped and painted the Camelback Bridge off Lake Road. They were also joined by two tree frogs!! It turned out to be a beautiful day!

In May, the Alma-St. Louis Rotary Club did some trimming and replaced the Rotary signs on the mile markers of the Trail.

A workday organized by Patty Rockafellow was held on July 27. The Trail was swept and trimmed in the middle of Montcalm County. Thanks to Patty, Bob Braman (long-time user and volunteer, even when there isn't a workday), Don and Claudah Horrigan (volunteers and "honorary" Board Members, as Don comes to most meetings and they both helped at our Banquet), and Craig Rockafellow (who's very handy with a saw)!

On July 31, Jane Hemenway gathered her friends Sue Manciu, Janet Balice, and Laura Tjaisma, all from Ionia, and trimmed from Carlson Road to Sidney Road. Don and Claudah Horrigan helped with a tricky branch cut. DeKrakers from Greenville provided a cold drink on them for a job well-done! Jane's crew said they had a blast!

Nicki & Eric Hansen trimmed from Central Montcalm schools to the Dalmac bridge.

On August 10, Tim Kellner organized a workday with Mike Sharkey, Don Stearns, Karen Stearns, Don Singer, Cynda Singer, Dave Saxton, and Tim all trimming a large amount of brush hanging over the Trail.



## Volunteers are the Core of the Trail, con't

**There is a section open for a volunteer mower, from Epley Road to Cannonsville Road. Call Dianne at 989-268-5143 if you are interested.**



In October the Alma College Football team trimmed and cleaned in Gratiot County.

The day before the the DALMAC riders rode our Trail we had a fairly severe storm that knocked down several trees. Don Horrigan, Mark Prout, and several other volunteers took care of fallen trees and cleared the Trail so the riders had a clear path.

Karen & Don Stearns installed the replacement boards for the Byl bench, whose back boards were stolen last year.

Volunteer Mowers use both our and their own equipment to keep the Trail neat and open. This group is organized, supported, and encouraged by Dianne Wilson, FFMHT Board Member. A huge thanks to all mowers for volunteering all summer long to keep our Trail clean and the edges mown: David Christensen, Sheridan; Jack Pearl, Sidney; Rick Baldwin, Stanton; Bruce Basom, Stanton; Roger Hinton, McBride; Jeff Hansen, Edmore; Mike Gilbert, Edmore; Bill Ball, Edmore; Monty Stratton, Vestaburg; Cal Callison, Vestaburg; Dianne Wilson, Vestaburg; Paul Gruca, Riverdale; David Maybee, Alma; Mark Edgar, Riverdale; Steve Tanner, McBride; Lori Kellogg, Greenville; Tom Burge, Sidney; Don Horrigan, Greenville. Thank you ALL!

Zach Perrin (The Stump Guy) and Jacob Cesar donated five days of labor and cleaning to check out the entire Trail in April for downed trees and winter debris. They also were rehired by the Board to do the fall ditch mowing, which has been completed. This



The Friends organization is an all volunteer group. Please let us know about downed trees and brush, vandalism or damage, or anything else that is amiss.

The trail is at its best when everyone participates.

If you see something amiss, please say something.

## Volunteers are the Core of the Trail, con't

17.5 days of mowing cleared the Trail from Greenville to Alma. That's 42 miles of mowing both sides, for a total 84 MILES! Adventures included one flat tire (large rear tire) and one fuel filter replacement. Many thanks to you both!

Ongoing volunteer outreach efforts include brochures located in the Greenville Chamber of Commerce, Alma City offices, and in Edmore City Hall and monthly meetings posted on both the website and Facebook page. The public is welcomed—indeed, encouraged—to attend these open meetings.

Ongoing updating of the website is done by Jane Hemenway, and the Facebook page is updated by Sarah Avery. Both sites post announcements of volunteer opportunities, Trail resurfacing dates, funding awarded, and other timely information you'll want to know if heading out to ride or walk on sections of the Trail. Both sites also relay messages when there are questions or trees down.

An annual newsletter is mailed to all members of the Friends of the FMHT in early December each year. The newsletter is posted to the website and Facebook a week after the printed copy is mailed to members. Board members provide the information to Sarah Avery, who lays out and edits the newsletter. The Montcalm Area ISD allows usage of their color printer for printing and the Board provides manual labor in getting the newsletter printed and mailed.

Patty Rockafellow organized a table with brochures and membership materials near Rolston Hardware for the two-day Stanton Old Fashioned Days.

Dianne Wilson maintained a table with brochures and membership materials at the Riverdale Museum twice this summer.

Patty Rockafellow created a display for the Trail at Heritage Village Festival on the campus of Montcalm Community College.

Karen Stearns created a wall display of the Mid-West Michigan Trail and had a table with brochures and membership materials during the three-day Vestaburg Community Days.

Dianne Wilson, Don & Karen Stearns, and Dolly Hockemeyer greeted about 140 costumed individuals during a two-hour Halloween evening at the Vestaburg Depot. This event was sponsored by Friends of the Heartland Trail and the Vestaburg Historical Society.



QR CODE TO THE TRAIL ONLINE MAP:



# Banquet & Fundraiser 2024

by Jane Hemenway

The FFMHT 30th Annual Banquet and Fundraiser was held Saturday May 4, 2024, at the Curtis Building in Edmore. It was a fun evening of prizes, dinner, and Trail talk. Thank you to all who contributed their time and treasures to make our event so successful, including, but not limited to:

Bookwalter Chevrolet, Stanton  
Dennis Bicycle Shop, Alma  
Edmore Inn/The Depot, Edmore  
FFMHT Board Members  
GFWC Edmore Women's Club  
Michigan One Community Credit Union  
Montcalm Area Intermediate School District  
Terry's Cycle & Sport, Alma  
3D's Pizza, Vestaburg  
Don & Sue Reithel  
Edmore True Value Hardware  
Joe Garcia and family  
Joel and Sue Avery  
Mark Sabin  
MTB Autobody  
Phyllis Painter Family  
Randall's Edmore  
Ranger Power, based in Chicago, Illinois  
Steve & Sally Litwiller

The Raffle drawing helped raise money for maintenance, resale, insurance, and many other expenses. Almost \$2,000 was raised by the Silent Auction.

Raffle winners:

Mark Fritsma--Electra Townie 7D Step Thru Bike, with fenders & computer  
Carol Smith--Reid Comfort 700 Mens Bike, black  
Barbara Lang--Two nights for two, Small Point B&B, Mackinac Island, MI  
Shelly Springborn--Two nights for two, Candlelite Inn B&B, Ludington, MI  
Janet Shy--Two nights for two, North Bay B&B, Presque Isle, MI



# Grants and Improvements

## TRAIL REPAIR & RESEALING

by Karen Stearns

Without our community support by way of grants, donations, memberships, and volunteers, we could not keep the Trail maintained as well as it is. D&D Asphalt was contracted with funds provided largely through grants for the following sections of Trail repair and resealing:

Pingree Road to Warner Road, funded by Midwest Michigan Trail Authority, \$11,455

Pine Street to North Street in Stanton, partially funded by Central Montcalm Community Foundation grant \$3,000, and partially by Midwest Michigan Trail Authority, \$1,483

Carlson Road to Sidney Road, funded by Greenville Area Community Foundation grant, \$5980

Sidney Road to Grow Road, funded by Midwest Michigan Trail Authority, \$13,156

Deaner Road to Forest Street, funded by Midwest Michigan Trail Authority, 4,921

Deaner Road to Lake Montcalm Road, funded by Midwest Michigan Trail Authority, \$6,142

Subsidence, \$900 - FFMHT

TOTAL \$47,372.00, majority funded by grants from the MWMTA, \$ 8980 other grants.

## WARNER ROAD APPROACHES REPLACED

In May, Gratiot County Road Commission repaved Warner Road and the cement approaches to the Trail were removed and repoured to be even with the new pavement. Thanks to Tim Kellner for getting this picture of the new approaches.



## ROUNDAABOUT

by Karen Stearns

The bicycle roundabout at the south end of the Trail in Greenville is nearly completed and the reinstallation of the FMHT kiosk and signage to signal the FMHT direction (north) is coming soon. Stay tuned to Facebook for pictures of the kiosk and sign.





## Something New!, Membership, & Usage

### TRAIL USAGE

May 18, Alma Glen Gravel Ramble biking event starting at the City of Alma Trailhead (in town) and going to Rich Road

Late May, Rock Lake Christian Assembly Bike-a-Thon for camper scholarships awarded this summer

Last week of August, two of the DALMAC ride sections rode parts of the Trail in Gratiot and part of Montcalm County

### MEMBERSHIP IN THE FFMHT

Are you interested in the development and maintenance of the Fred Meijer Heartland Trail?

Annual dues to FFMHT are inexpensive, easy, and very important for maintaining the Trail. The Friends of the Fred Meijer Heartland Trail is a 501(c)(3) corporation. Memberships and contributions are tax deductible per IRS regulations. Send your membership or a contribution to: FFMHT, PO Box 455, Edmore, MI 48829, or COMING SOON, click to donate online! Check on Facebook or the website for the link.

We appreciate ALL support!

### SAVE THE DATE FOR SOMETHING NEW!!

**Mark your calendar for a Benefit on the Trail on June 8, 2025, in Edmore. Raffle drawings, food, music, and so much more. You don't want to miss this! More information coming soon! Let's make this fundraising event great for the Heartland Trail!**

**This event replaces our May Banquet & Fundraiser.**

Find us online at  
<https://www.fredmeijerheartlandtrail.org/>

Follow us on Facebook for current Trail notices and announcements.

Keyword: MiFMHT

## 2024 MEMBERS/DONORS

There are many ways people support the Trail - whether it is through being a member; donating money or providing a memorial; supporting fundraising events; mowing; serving on the Board; or working on Trail maintenance, the newsletter, or other projects.

THANK YOU ALL for your support and efforts in keeping this wonderful Trail going!!

