



GITCHI-GAMI STATE TRAIL NEWS

A publication of the Gitchi-Gami Trail Association

Fall 2013

What Does the Future Hold for the Gitchi-Gami Trail?

Fall drapes the Gitchi-Gami State Trail (GGST) in bright oranges, reds and yellows, and trail users enjoy the crisp air and absence of bugs. Another section to enjoy has just been completed — 1.5 miles connecting the end of the trail northeast of the town of Tofte to the Lutsen Ski Hill Rd (Cook Co Rd 5). Construction of this segment of trail required blasting through bedrock and trenching drainage systems through swampland. The trail is an engineering marvel, beautifully executed, and illustrates the difficulties involved in building the GGST.

Those difficulties also contribute to the slow pace of trail construction. The Gitchi-Gami Trail Association (GGTA) was organized in the late 90's to work with the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources (DNR), the Department of Transportation (MnDOT), local governments, and other entities to build a paved recreational trail from Two Harbors to Grand Marais, along Lake Superior's North Shore. Construction began in the early 2000's in the Gooseberry Falls and Tofte areas, using federal and state funding. MnDOT's plans for widening and improving Hwy 61 incorporated simultaneous construction of the GGST. Now there are several sections of completed trail along the corridor, the longest of which is about 17 miles, from Gooseberry Falls State Park to the city of Silver Bay, with a .8-mile gap from the Beaver Bay trailhead to the terminus of the new paved trail segment west of Silver Bay (including a half mile of dirt road — a construction priority).

Unfortunately, construction of the GGST has now slowed, as both federal and state funds for trail development are limited. Federal funds earmarked for

portions of the trail (Cascade State Park to Grand Marais, Silver Bay to Tettegouche State Park, and the Beaver Bay gap) have not been released because state matching funds have not

been allocated. Governor Tim Pawlenty vetoed matching funds for trail construction included in a bonding bill in 2010. An effort to pass new bonding authority for trails failed in the last legislative session, although there is hope that funds for the GGST will be awarded in a new bonding bill next year. In general, however, funding for parks and trails suffers in times of fiscal austerity. And MnDOT's ambitious plan for widening and improving Hwy 61 — which could have included trail construction — have been delayed and curtailed.

There is some reason for optimism, however. In addition to the likelihood of The importance of the GGST has been recognized by the DNR and the Arrowhead Regional Development Commission (ARDC). The ARDC was contracted with funds from the Lake Superior Coastal Program, Lake and Cook Counties, and the GGTA, to update a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between MnDOT, MnDNR and the GGTA. The purpose of the original MOU was "to outline different roles and responsibilities for the planning, development, engineering, operation, maintenance, interpretation, resource management, community relations activities of the Gitchi-Gami trail." A series of four inter-agency meetings was held over the summer. The GGTA is hopeful the new MOU will revitalize efforts by all parties to continue building the trail. New funding sources will be necessary to make that happen.

In addition to paving the half-mile of gravel road in the Beaver Bay "gap," the GGTA has categorized several other projects as high priority, including building about three miles of trail connecting Grand Marais to the Cutface Creek wayside; completing trail through Tofte, connecting existing trails on either side of town; and raising funds for engineering trail connecting Silver Bay with Tettegouche State Park.

You can help! Your membership contributions will allow the GGTA to continue working toward completion of the trail. And you can tell your legislators that the GGST is important to you and should be funded.

We'll update the website, www.ggta.org, when we have news to report. Meanwhile, happy pedaling!

~ Gitchi-Gami Trail Association



Support
the GGTA!
See inside!

TRAIL COORDINATOR'S REPORT

The summer went by too quickly, like most Minnesota summers. We started out in early June crack sealing the trail with a piece of

equipment borrowed from our DNR Moose Lake Parks & Trails folks and a fresh Minnesota Conservation Corps crew. It was a learning

experience, as the MCC crew had not run an asphalt crack sealing machine before, but with a little training they were able to complete the project within the two-week time frame we planned on.

Later on in the season, we were able to add needed signage along the trail corridor, especially north of Tofte — mainly near resort entry and exit driveways. This was done in order to enhance user awareness of possible hazards near these busy intersections.

We also have just completed another 1.5 miles of new trail in the Lutsen area, which increases our total completed trail mileage to about 29 miles. The contractor met considerable challenges in this segment, but did an outstanding job of delivering a quality trail. This stretch of trail originally consisted of an “underpass to nowhere” on one end, and a “bridge to nowhere” on the other. But the freshly paved trail uniting these previously constructed, idle structures now extends the Tofte trail segment to about

seven miles, from the town of Tofte to the Ski Hill Road (Cook Co Rd 5), at the base of Lutsen Mountains ski resort. These structures and others along the trail were designed and built to withstand the challenges that Mother Nature will no doubt send our way. This section will be shared with snowmobiles during the off-season months of December through March.

We also were able to complete a couple of asphalt patch repairs within the town of Beaver Bay that were required due to underground sewer work that was done a couple of years ago. These patch repairs come up occasionally and need to be dealt with in a timely manner.

There are other segments near the Temperance River area and the Tofte Ranger Station that will require reconstruction due to ground heaving problems. We hope to get these areas repaired next season. On a positive note, this fall we expect to finally add 580 feet of trail to close a gap on the east side of the town of Schroeder, at the southeast end of the Schroeder to Tofte trail section that traverses beautiful Temperance River State Park.

The DNR also received a brand new mower for trail maintenance, with funds allocated by the Gitchi-Gami Trail Association. The DNR is grateful to the GGTA for making that happen. Over the years, the GGTA has supported maintenance challenges by providing funds to purchase vital pieces of equipment used by our staff to keep the trail in good repair.

*~ Mark Rudningen,
Trail Development
Specialist, DNR*



The new segment from Lutsen Ski Hill Rd to Co Rd 34 drops between excavated rock cliffs to an underpass beneath Hwy 61.



Gitchi-Gami Trail Association
PO Box 74
Silver Bay, MN 55614

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Annual Ride: Sun, Wind, Happy Bikers

What a beautiful trail!" "A great day!" "Perfect weather!" "Thanks for what you are doing!" "The Split Rock area is hilly!" These were some of the comments of participants at the 13th Annual Gitche-Gami Trail Association North Shore Bike Ride on August 17.

The temperature was in the low 70's and sunny — a sparkling North Shore summer day. A 15-mile-an-hour breeze from the southwest kicked up in the afternoon, but garnered only a few grumbles. There were 135 bikers, plus a few tots in Burleys, and 20 handicapped participants who used the ride as a summer outing. They sampled a short stretch of the trail and earned ride t-shirts.

About two-thirds of the bikers completed the 28-mile route, from Gooseberry Falls State Park to the Beaver Bay rest stop and back on the trail. The challenging 55-mile route added an inland loop and drew 29 riders, who took a break at the Eckbeck rest stop on Hwy 1. About a dozen riders tried out the new 37-mile route, incorporating the three-mile section from Silver Bay to Beaver Bay — 2.3 miles of newly paved trail, with a half mile on a dirt road (a paving priority), joining Hwy 61 just east of the Beaver Bay trailhead.

Thanks to our volunteers, who again donated most of an August Saturday to help put on the event. Nancy Mancini and husband Mike Hoops hosted the Beaver Bay Rest stop; Mark Sandbo spent a long day signing and then removing signs along the routes; Bob Risch (Trikes For Life) did early set-up and provided sag support; Superior North Outdoor Center provided mechanical support; Anne McKinsey worked the new trail intersection in Silver Bay; and Beth Blank and my sister-in-law Lynn Blank worked at the registration table. All in all a great day.

Mark your calendars and plan to come for next year's ride on August 16, 2014!

~ Bill Blank, VP and ride director



The new Silver Bay-Beaver Bay segment traverses Cliffs Northshore Mining property donated to the GGST. A trail wayside at a stunning overlook features a bench and interpretive sign — with a bright blue Northshore engine passing by on the tracks below and Pellet Island (part of the Silver Bay Marina breakwater) visible in Lake Superior beyond.

SUPPORT THE GGTA!

The Gitche-Gami Trail Association has not asked for your support for two years, because we temporarily lost our tax-exempt status by overlooking a filing requirement. YIKES! After a year-long application process, our 501(c)(3) nonprofit status has been restored by the IRS. HOORAY! This means that your membership and all donations to the GGTA are again fully tax-deductible. Contributions support our work with the DNR, MnDOT, and other agencies in planning, development, construction, maintenance, and promotion of the trail; purchase of equipment and kiosks; GGTA activities, publications, and more. PLEASE JOIN OR RENEW YOUR MEMBERSHIP! You can use this form or the mail-in form on the website, www.ggta.org, or join online using the link to GiveMN.org that you will find on the website.

GGTA MEMBERSHIP FORM

Name: _____

Address: _____

Phone: _____

*Email: _____

(*The GGTA will not share your email address with any other persons or organizations.)

Type of membership:

Individual – \$20 per year

Family – \$35 per year

Senior (60 years +) – \$15 per year

Student – \$15 per year

Lifetime – \$500

Extra donation for trail maintenance \$ _____

Send this form with a check for your membership and extra donation made out to the "GGTA" to:

Gitche-Gami Trail Association

P.O. Box 74

Silver Bay, MN 55614

CONTRIBUTIONS TO THE GGTA ARE TAX-DEDUCTIBLE.

Consider contributing to the GGTA through GiveMN.org on "Give to the Max Day," November 14 — the day when the generosity of Minnesotans is on display, and when your donations can mean bonus benefits to your favorite causes.





Gitchi-Gami Trail Association

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Silver Bay, MN 55614



**Name
this
Newsletter!**

**Gitchi-Gami State Trail
News? That's not very
original or catchy!
Do you have a better
name? Submit your
idea (maximum one
entry per person) to
editor@ggta.org, for a
chance to win a Gitchi-
Gami Trail water bottle!**

**Deadline for entry is
December 15. While
you're at it, let us know
what you think of the
newsletter, and what
you'd like to see in it.**



GITCHI-GAMI STATE TRAIL CONSTRUCTION SCHEDULE (as of October 2013)

Sections in bold are completed Underlined sections are in construction or engineering

YEAR	SEGMENT NAME	PROJECT AREA	MILES
2001	Gooseberry Falls State Park Phase I	East limit of Gooseberry Falls SP to Gooseberry River	1.2
2002	Split Rock Lighthouse State Park	Split Rock River to Mary Street in Beaver Bay	7.8
2002	Tofte	Tofte to .5 mile west of Onion River	2.5
2002	Beaver Bay Trail	Mary Street to Beaver River trail head area	0.6
2003	Grand Marais	West limit of Grand Marais to 8th Ave W	1.5
2004	Temperance River SP Phase I & II	Schroeder to Tofte	3.0
2004	Silver Creek Cliff Trail	West limit of Silver Creek Cliff to overlook	0.5
2006	Gooseberry to Split Rock Connector	East limit of Gooseberry Falls SP to Split Rock River	3.5
2008	Gooseberry Falls State Park Phase II	Gooseberry Falls SP trail head to .5 miles east of TH 61 Bridge	1.5
2010	Onion River	.5 miles west of Onion River to CR 34	3.0
2012	Beaver Bay to Silver Bay	West Road in Beaver Bay to Silver Bay	2.3
2013	Lutsen Phase I	CR 34 to CR 5 (Ski Hill Road)	<u>1.6</u>
TOTAL COMPLETED			29.0
2014?	<u>Beaver Bay Trail Head</u>	<u>Beaver Bay trail head to east end of West Road</u>	<u>0.8</u>
20??	Cascade River State Park Phase I	Cascade River to west limit of Grand Marais	8.0
20??	Tettegouche State Park	Silver Bay to Tettegouche State Park	7.0
20??	Lutsen Phase II	CR 5 (Ski Hill Road) to CR 41	4.8
20??	Town of Tofte	USFS to east side of Tofte	1.0
20??	The Tunnels	Silver Creek Tunnel to Lafayette Tunnel	2.3
20??	Castle Danger	Lafayette Tunnel to Gooseberry Falls SP trail head	4.2
20??	Cascade River State Park Phase II	CR 41 to Cascade River	3.9
20??	Illgen City	Tettegouche SP to 3.3 miles north of TH 1	5.0
20??	Two Harbors Phase I	Two Harbors to Stewart River	2.4
20??	Two Harbors Phase II	Stewart River to Silver Cliff Tunnel	2.8
20??	Taconite Harbor	Cook County line to Schroeder	7.7
20??	Little Marais	3.3 miles north of TH 1 to 1.75 miles north of Little Marais	3.1
20??	Caribou Falls State Wayside	1.75 miles north of Little Marais to Cook County Line	<u>5.7</u>
GRAND TOTAL			87.7