

Trail Activity Abounds in West Michigan!

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It's been a busy trail year for West Michigan Trails & Greenways Coalition, and we've been involved in a number of new, and continuing, projects. Projects we've worked on this year include:

1. **Map Atlas Project:** WMTGC has undertaken the project of developing a map atlas for the trails of West Michigan. We're working with the Annis Water Resources Institute (GVSU, Muskegon). The project is grant-funded through the Meijer Foundation, the Rapid Wheelmen Bicycle Club, and an anonymous corporate donor. When completed, the map atlas will include detailed pages of each of the trails of West Michigan, as well as street maps of the communities through which they run. The atlas will identify trail surfaces, canopies, trail heads, rest stops, bicycle shops, ice cream shops, historical data, restaurants, etc. for each trail. The atlas is on track to be completed this Fall – probably in September.
2. **West Michigan Trails & Greenways Coalition (WMTGC), between late 2009 & early 2010, Committed funds to the following trail projects for 2010-2011:**
 - \$50,000 to East GR for the Reeds Lake Trail to help with final funding for completion of the trail.
 - \$50,000 to Lowell Area Recreation Authority (LARA) for Safe Routes to School Project: Trail connecting schools, parks, etc.
 - \$50,000 to the Kal-Haven Trail for Lighting & Trail Head Updates.
 - \$75,000 additional funding to the Fred Meijer Standale Trail, for needed add'l. funding for their trail

project.

3. **New Magazine:** We have a new partnership with Rockford Advertising for a limited-edition magazine on the trails of West Michigan. It will be approximately 85 pages, and will incorporate interviews, maps, opinions and general information on the trails. The magazine will compliment the map atlas, and go beyond to offer readers a comprehensive, collectible, once-a-year trail magazine. The first publication is scheduled for release in March/April of 2011.
4. **Interns:** WMTGC continues a partnership with Grand Valley State University's intern program within the Marketing/Publicity/Advertising programs. These enthusiastic, creative, professional, energetic and willing interns have developed new ideas and projects, with implementation layouts, and also participate in most aspects of the Coalition.
- 5 **Trainings:** WMTGC partnered with the Southwest Michigan Planning Commission and Michigan Trails and Greenways Alliance on a series of 4 Trails-Related Workshops on how to build a trail, and what you need to know about the trail-building process. The individual sessions include "Getting your Trail Project on the Ground;" "Funding Your Trail Project;" "Trail Liability & Maintenance;" and, "Connecting The Dots – Regional Connectivity."

6. Trail Progress in West Michigan:

The Fred Meijer Berry Junction Trail is progressing steadily, and their hopes are to break ground and complete their trail in 2011. The townships and the local road commission are working in partnership with MDOT, the MDNRE, and WMTGC .

The Fred Meijer Standale Trail in Walker, is underway! Wolverine Building Group is working with the City of Walker, and they will have a ribbon-cutting sometime in September or October this year. The Fred Meijer Standale Trail will eventually provide access from the north, into Millennium Park, and eventually connect to the Musketawa Trail.

The Fred Meijer Kenowa Trail will break ground next spring, 2011, with plans for completion in 2012. It will link to the Kent Trails system to the east, and to the west with the Macatawa Trails.

The North Bank Trail (Spring Lake to Coopersville) is progressing with land access, plans, engineering, and other preliminary projects. It hopes to eventually go beyond Coopersville to connect into the Musketawa Trail.

The Grand River Greenway (North) is proposed to run from Grand Haven along the Grand River. From there it will continue southeast, cross the 68th street bridge and connect into the Grand River Greenway (South) Trail, eastward through the GVSU campus, to the south side of Millennium Park in Grand Rapids.

The Sparta Trail Project is the newest trail project of West Michigan. The Village of Sparta currently has an in-town trail that they hope to expand to a 100-acre woods near the Village, that runs along the river, and connect eastward with the Fred Meijer White Pine State Trail. The long-range plan also connects this trail west to the Musketawa, establishing an approximately 34-mile loop through the Village of Sparta and a connection to two major West Michigan trails.

We encourage everyone to visit the trails of West Michigan. The trails along the lakeshore will take you through some beautiful scenic areas, wildlife water habitats, and on to the dunes of Lake Michigan – all the way from Saugatuck to Ludington. Those trails connect to others, traveling from eastward to Grand Rapids, Byron Center, and northward through Rockford, all the way to Cadillac. If you take the southern-most trails, the Kal-Haven will get you to Lake Michigan at South Haven, and the Kalamazoo River Valley Trail leads to even more areas to discover and enjoy.

The next time you plan a trip to Lake Michigan, or any part of the western side of the State – bring your bike! For more information about West Michigan's trails and the West Michigan Trails and Greenways Coalition, visit our website at www.wmtrails.org