



# Thunder Bay Trails News



Volume 2, Issue 1

Newsletter of The Thunder Bay Trails Association

January 1998

## Mission statement:

*The mission of the Thunder bay Trails Association is to promote and protect non-motorized trail systems in Alpena county and adjoining areas and reflect their recreational significance for the enjoyment, education and adventure to area citizens.*

- **Monthly Meeting,** Every Second Tuesday of each month - ACC Center Building, Room 106
- **January 18,** 12:00 p.m. - Norway Ridge Trail - X-C Ski Poker Run - Meet in Parking Lot
- **Feb. 15,** Black Mountain Rec. Area X-C Ski Tour
- **TBA(end of Feb.)** - Snowshoe/ Bushwhack Ski at Rockport to Sinkholes
- **March 21,** Wabos X-C Ski Loppet - Stokely Creek, Canada

## Rails to Trails Update

This past fall was hectic for various members of the Thunder Bay Trails Association as they made presentations at various planning meetings to rally public support for the acquisition of eight miles of abandoned railway. According to TBTA President, Vince Call, "the key to getting the MDNR interested in utilizing Land Trust Fund monies for railbanking relies on county-wide support from various governing and planning organizations." Vince and other TBTA members have been acting as advocates for the rail-to-trail concept and made presentations to gather support from the Alpena Township Board, the Alpena Tourism and Visitor Center, Chamber of Commerce, the Alpena Planning Commission, and the Alpena Public Schools Board of Education.

The response has been acceptance of the idea of a trail, but reluctance to see any part of the trail designated as solely non-motorized. Some planning commissions voiced concerns over safety and liability. Currently, Alpena county has an extensive network of mo-

torized trails in Alpena county and yet the designation of an eight mile stretch of abandoned railway as non-motorized appears to be a formidable task. The TBTA hoped to see a small portion of the trail listed as non-motorized in order to create a trail link from Alpena to the back entrance of the Norway Ridge Trail system.

Recently, it was confirmed by the MDNR Trails division that the abandoned rail line has been put in rail bank status. Funding for the rail conversion will not be considered until the spring application period and actual conversion may be two years away.

## Trail Work Bee a Success!

On October 18, a hardy group of some thirty TBTA members showed up to ready Norway Ridge Pathway for winter skiing use. The group was led by Michigan Department of Natural Resources Forest Technician, Richard Barber. Members showed up with everything from tree pruners to chainsaws. The weather proved to be quite cooperative and the dedicated volunteers spent their entire afternoon working to clear brush and widen the trail. This spring we hope to begin more major projects on the Norway Ridge System.



*The fall work bee at Norway Ridge Pathway had many dedicated volunteers to assist with brush removal and trail widening.*

## Spotlight on MDNR Officer

Joe Soncrainte has been assigned as the forest fire lead worker for the Michigan Department of Natural Resources in Alpena. He replaces Bill Hayes, who retired this past summer. Joe is a resident of Montmorency county and a graduate of Lake Superior State University. Aside from Joe's years of service as a DNR officer, he has also acted as a volunteer fire fighter and a full-time fire officer. During the past 26 years, Joe has been involved in some of North America's worst forest fires and has tended to flames in Washington, Oregon, Idaho, Montana, Nevada, and Canada. At age 43, Joe is in excellent shape and states that his passion is "fighting fires".

Currently, he has been assigned fire prevention, investigation, and recreational duties at the Alpena DNR office. His assignments in Alpena will include overseeing the Chippewa Hills, Norway Ridge, and Besser Bell Pathways. During the summer months he is also assigned to the Ossineke and Thunder Bay River campgrounds. Joe will be responsible for snow grooming and plowing at Norway Ridge Trails this winter. The TBTA would like to welcome Joe to the Alpena area and looks forward to a long-term working

### ***Rail-to-Trail Safety and Risk***

*The following article is an excerpt from the December edition of the MMBA's Bent Rim Bugle. The article seems to pinpoint some of the opposition that the TBTA has received from local governing entities on rail-to-trail acquisition. JB*

Many mountain bike/rail-trail opponents claim that these trails are unsafe for the users and adjacent landowners. As "proof," they gather anecdotes about crime and danger on trails. Second, they assert that these crimes prove all trails are unsafe. Third, they draw the conclusion that your trail will also be crime and danger ridden and should not be built.

I believe this line of argument employs a double standard of safety and risk. Those who attack the safety of trails would never think of applying the same type of risk analysis to other forms of transportation, recreation or life in general. It's a neat logical trick: by demanding perfect safety (i. e., no risks) in an imperfect and risky world, they create an artificial and impossible high standard of safety that trail makers can never meet.

Trail opponents don't require promises of perfect safety in other areas of life, or they wouldn't get out of bed in the morning. They ignore all the risks involved in walking, riding in a car or crossing the supermarket parking lot while waving a few anecdotes about danger on trails. I've gathered some statistics over the years on risks and safety that might help make the point.

Government sources estimate that air bags in motor vehicles have saved 2,700 lives. Yet at the same time they have killed 87 people - 48 adults and 39 children (NBC Nightly News, Nov. 17, 1997).

Trains are one of the most efficient ways to move freight. Yet a vehicle-train crash occurs about once every 90 minutes. Two motorists are killed daily in these crashes (Goshen News, July 13, 1994; data from Indiana Operation Lifesaver.)

And, of course, the most glaring source of risky behavior - the highways. In 1993,

53,717 motor vehicles were involved in 35,747 fatal crashes, resulting in 40,115 deaths (Insurance Institute for Highway Safety). Does this statistic mean we should, therefore, ban motor vehicles or highways or both?

Every form of human activity involve risks. The question is whether the risks are acceptable in light of the rewards. Our society, with some bazaar logic, rationalizes away or accepts 40,000 deaths each year from motor vehicles because it believes the rewards are acceptable. Once established, trails have proven to be safe as the surrounding community through which they pass. The rewards of recreation and non-motorized transportation they provide far outweigh the risks.

While it is important not to trivialize or deny that bad things can happen on trails, it is equally important to examine the logic behind the anecdotes. Are trail opponents willing to apply their let's-close-the-trails logic to other activities, e.g., close all highways because 40,000 people are killed each year; close all colleges because there were 1,000 rapes? If not, then they are using a double standard to analyze risks-a selective use of statistics to discredit what is a relatively safe activity.

Two final points. First, we need to educate trail users about elementary safety precautions. We should caution people about jogging alone on an isolated trail, just as we would caution against jogging alone on an isolated country road or the mall parking lot.

Second, if there are safety problems on trails, we need to fix them. That's what we do with highways. If there's a dangerous highway curve, we straighten it. If a certain highway intersection has frequent accidents, we redesign it or put up stoplights. But, we don't close the road when we discover a problem, and we don't stop building more of them. Instead, we improve them. Why would it be any different for trails?

*John D. Yoder, President  
Friends of the Pumpkinvine Nature Trail, Inc. Goshen,  
IN 46526-4836  
jdyoder@compuserve.com*

TBTA 1998 Membership Form

# THUNDER BAY TRAILS ASSOCIATION

Please take the time to fill out the form completely. This information will help to better assist our individual members needs and assist with planning and grant writing for trail maintenance and improvement.



**PLEASE PRINT!**

Please send form to:  
TBTA  
2700 Beebe Blvd.  
Ossineke, MI 49766

**Name: Names of Household Members:**

**Street Address:**

**City: State: Zip Code:**

**Home Phone Number: Work Phone Number:** (Optional)

**Occupation: E-mail Address:** (Optional)

**What activities do you participate in? PLEASE CHECK ALL THAT APPLY!**

Hiking

X-C Skiing

Mtn. Biking

Running

Nature Viewing

Family Trail Walks

Horseback Riding

**1998 Membership Dues:**

**Please check one category!**

Student \$5.00

Individual \$15.00

Household \$20.00

**Additional Donation: \$** \_\_\_\_\_

**Thank You!!**

*Thunder Bay Trails Association is a 501 (C)3 non-profit organization. Donations and membership dues are tax-deductible to the extent provided by law.*

Thunder Bay Trails Association

2700 Beebe Blvd.  
Ossineke, MI 49766



Postage



## 1998 Membership Application Enclosed:

*We recently acquired non-profit status both at the state and federal level; your membership dues and donations are now tax deductible. Please take the time to assist us by completing the membership form and returning it to TBTA. Thank You!*

### TBTA - WHAT'S

- 1998 TBTA Membership Form
- 1998 TBTA Winter Events Calendar
- Rail-to-Trail Update - link to Norway Ridge Trail System
- Fall Work Bee at Norway Ridge Trail
- New MDNR officer assigned to duties in Alpena County
- Rail-to-Trail opponents create a double-standard

