



GITCHI-GAMI TRAIL RIDER

A publication of the Gitchi-Gami Trail Association

Spring / Summer 2014

New Gitchi-Gami construction planned

We at the Gitchi-Gami Trail Association (GGTA) have been hopeful that this would be the year when construction of the Gitchi-Gami State Trail (GGST) could get back on track. Federal funding for trail construction has been on hold for several years awaiting state matching funds. Although we did not get funding for all the projects on our "wish list," we were pleased that \$1.47 million for the GGST was included in the nearly \$60 million allotted to parks and trails in the bonding bill recently passed by the Legislature and signed into law. Also, we have been pursuing other funding sources for specific projects.

Most years we have been able to add new trail miles. Last year we dedicated the 3-mile trail connecting Beaver Bay and Silver Bay, although .8 miles remain either gravel or road shoulder. We were also able to pave the last 100 yards of trail on the Tofte to Schroeder segment, so the trail connects to a parking area. The major addition was 1½ miles of trail from Cook Co Rd 34 to the trail terminus near the junction of Hwy 61 and the Lutsen Ski Hill Rd (Co Rd 5) – a monumental undertaking involving blasting through bedrock, filling wetlands, and connecting a highway underpass, documented in last year's newsletters.

This year there will be no new trail built, but the stage is set for new trail projects to be added in the next 3-4 years:

- Federal funds in place will be matched by state funds included in the bonding bill to complete 3.1 miles of trail connecting the current in-town trail in Grand Marais southwest to the recently landscaped and improved Cut Face Wayside on Hwy 61. Construction is slated to begin in the fall of 2015.
- Also in the fall of 2015, paving should begin on the 1/2-mile "missing link" to bring the Beaver Bay to Silver Bay segment down to Hwy 61 from where it dead-ends on the gravel West Road. We anticipate that a federal TAP grant (Transportation Alternatives Program) will be matched by the state Department of Natural Resources (DNR) for this work.
- The Minnesota Department of Transportation (MnDOT) has committed funding for the Beaver River bridge and road shoulder in the same trail area, to complete the Beaver Bay connection, but the timing of construction is not yet known.
- Plans are underway to connect the trail through the town of Tofte. Currently, there are 3 miles of completed trail to the southwest from Tofte, passing through

Temperance River State Park and ending in Schroeder. Another 7.1 miles of trail are complete from Tofte northeast to the Ski Hill Rd. The 1.1-mile ride through Tofte, on a town road, through parking lots and along Hwy 61, is clumsy and potentially unsafe. With assistance from the Arrowhead Regional Development Commission (ARDC), planning and engineering are underway, with construction likely 3-4 years out.

- Federal funds have also been dedicated to build trail from Silver Bay to Tettegouche State Park, requiring a state match. This project on our \$3 million "wish list" was not funded in the bonding bill, but we will continue to seek funding to extend the trail to the beautiful new state park building opening there this summer.

The rugged North Shore terrain, which provides such a beautiful setting for the trail, also causes much higher per-mile construction costs for the GGST than many other state bike trails. Your GGTA board is actively working with the DNR, MnDOT, state legislators, local officials, and advocacy groups such as the Parks and Trails Council of Minnesota, to fund and build our trail. Recently the ARDC has again come on board to help with planning, grant writing, and special projects – such as the long-anticipated mapping of wide shoulders on Hwy 61, soon to be added to the website. We are very grateful to Andy Hubley and his team for their assistance.

Your board was also actively involved in working with MnDOT to improve conditions in the Lutsen area. A major resurfacing project will be undertaken this summer on an 11-mile stretch of Hwy 61 from Ski Hill Rd to Co Rd 7 near Cascade State Park, through the town of Lutsen. Original plans called for a standard 18-inch paved shoulder. With the support of local officials and state legislators, we were successful in convincing MnDOT to expand the shoulder to 3 feet. While certainly not ideal (we would have preferred new trail, of course, or at least wider shoulders), this change will enhance pedestrian and bicycle safety in this area. Specifically, it will provide a safer bike route along Hwy 61 from the end of the trail at Ski Hill Rd one mile to the town of Lutsen, and beyond, to favorite biking areas including the Caribou Trail (Co Rd 4), and the wide shoulders of reconstructed Hwy 61 from Co Rd 7 to Grand Marais.

You can help our efforts to see the trail completed by participating in our annual ride, and joining the GGTA!

~ Bill Blank, vice president, GGTA

Gitchi-Gami Trail loses its best friend

Hon. James L. "Jim" Oberstar (1934-2014)

My friend and yours, Congressman Jim Oberstar, died on May 3, 2014, at 79 years. A miner's son, Jim was born and raised in Chisholm, graduating from Chisholm High School in 1952, and the College of St. Thomas in 1956. He received his Master's degree in European Studies from the College of Europe in Belgium (1957). After four years as a civilian language teacher in the Marine Corps (teaching French to the Marines and English to Haitian military personnel), Jim joined the staff of Minnesota Congressman John Blatnik, eventually becoming Blatnik's chief of staff and, finally, succeeding Blatnik after his retirement. He was first elected in 1974 and was reelected 17 times, serving Minnesota's 8th Congressional District for 36 years.

While recognized nationally as an expert on aviation and aviation safety, having helped create the Federal Economic Development Administration, and having chaired the House Transportation and Infrastructure Committee, many of us remember him locally for his critical support in attracting Cirrus Aircraft Company to Duluth, and his support of highway funding throughout Minnesota.

Most significant to readers of this newsletter were Jim's authorship of the bicycling provisions of the Intermodal Transportation Efficiency Act of 1991 (ISTEA), and the 2005 SAFETEA-LU Act, the most extensive surface transportation investment in U.S. history. That legislation has funded infrastructure, including highways, bridges, and public transportation — and also recreational trails like the GGST, and the Safe Routes to School program. In an interview upon leaving office in 2011, Jim said that of all his many

accomplishments, he was most proud of his legacy of service to Minnesota, specifically mentioning his advocacy of the Paul Bunyan and Gitchi-Gami State Trails.

In my capacity as president of the GGTA, I visited with Jim on several occasions seeking funding for our trail. His support led to significant funding successes, including early funding to the west, from Gooseberry to Silver Bay, and funding in place for the yet-to-be-built trail to Tettegouche; and, on the east end, from Schroeder to Lutsen. Without his support in getting federal funding, we would not have had the success we did have in leveraging funding from the State of Minnesota.

A review of our history reveals that Jim, an avid cyclist, provided the inspiration for the first GGTA annual ride in 2001 — then called the "Lighthouse Ride." Only a little more than a mile of trail had been built east of the Gooseberry River at that time. But the ride celebrated that milestone, with a "short ride" from Split Rock Lighthouse State Park to Beaver Bay and back along Highway 61's wide shoulder, and a hilly and challenging 54-mile "lighthouse to lighthouse" ride on county roads from Split Rock to the lighthouse in Two Harbors, with a shuttle back to the start. It was Jim's intent that the ride be an annual event, celebrating every new mile of trail.

I will certainly miss his leadership and support of our trail system, his ebullient personality, and his companionship on our annual trial rides. Jim's support of bike trail funding nationally and in Minnesota, in particular, are clearly attributable to his enthusiastic support of bicycling as great exercise.

~ Scott Harrison, past president, GGTA



Congressman Oberstar addresses riders

10 years ago at 4th Annual Trail Ride, accepts jersey from former GGTA board member Lee Radzak proclaiming him "America's Cycling Leader," and enjoys biking North Shore back roads.

Coming soon to a mailbox or inbox near you . . . GGTA Membership Campaign!

With our nonprofit status restored, new projects underway, and the need to show legislators and funding agencies that riders support the completion of the Gitchi-Gami State Trail, we will be asking you to join or renew your membership in the GGTA. The membership year will begin August 1, but anyone who joins now or joined recently will be deemed a member through July 2015. Members will receive reduced annual ride fees beginning in 2015, discounts on GGTA merchandise, and the knowledge that you will be helping to fund, promote, build, and maintain a premiere recreational trail on the North Shore.

14th Annual Gitchi-Gami Trail Association North Shore Bike Ride: Ride into History!

The 14th Annual GGTA North Shore Bike Ride will take place on Saturday, August 16, 2014. The recreational bike ride will once again begin and end in beautiful Gooseberry Falls State Park, located between Two Harbors and Silver Bay, on scenic Hwy 61.

Because of road construction scheduled this summer, this year's ride has some important changes from prior years. The "short" ride – 28 miles out and back on the Gitchi-Gami State Trail, from Gooseberry through historic Split Rock Lighthouse State Park, continuing to the rest stop at the Beaver Bay trailhead, and returning on the trail – will take place as usual.

However, the longer 37- and 55-mile loops will not be options this year, due to road construction north and east of Beaver Bay and in Silver Bay. We are offering one option: a

34-mile route, which will take riders out and back on the new GGST trail section from Beaver Bay to



Silver Bay. Since the trail is not complete from the Beaver Bay end to Hwy 61, this route will entail a mile of gravel road — ½ mile each way — on the West Road. The trail from Beaver Bay to Silver Bay is mainly uphill going out and downhill on the return. This option may appeal to riders wanting more "hill work" or those with mountain bikes.

But we have an additional enticement. This year only, we have made special arrangements for riders to tour Split Rock Lighthouse, operated by the Minnesota Historical Society within Split Rock State Park — right off of the GGST at the top of the park drive. Entry is free with your ride registration (the usual cost is \$9). We will also provide maps and other information about the state parks — Gooseberry, Split Rock, and nearby Tettegouche — to enhance your enjoyment of the North Shore experience. Admission to all state parks is free with your registration on ride day.

Snacks and refreshments will be provided at the Beaver Bay rest stop and post-ride. Mechanical, emergency and sag support will be provided. All adult riders will receive limited-edition, artist-designed t-shirts, and kids will receive water bottles.

All riders must sign waivers and wear helmets. Registration postmarked by August 1 is \$30. Registration thereafter is \$35. Registration for a child under 15 years old is \$5 with a paid adult. Register by mail with the form on this page, or register online through secure PayPal payment on the GGTA website, www.ggta.org.

Questions? Contact Bill Blank at annualride@ggta.org, or 218-370-1003.

Registration and Waiver Form

Name(s): _____

Address: _____

Phone: _____

Email: _____

Registration by Aug 1 \$30 After Aug 1 \$35

Children under 15 \$5 with paid adult

Ride options: _____ 28 miles _____ 34 miles

Circle shirt size: M L XL 2d rider: M L XL

I agree by my entry into this event to accept its inherent risks, and absolve the Gitchi-Gami Trail Association (GGTA), its officers and employees, and all other organizers, sponsors, volunteers and associated entities, with their heirs and assigns, singly or collectively, of all blame or liability for any harm, inconvenience, injury, loss, or other misadventure suffered as a result of taking part in the GGTA North Shore Bike Ride.

Any qualified doctor or medical technician is hereby authorized to provide me medical treatment in response to an accident, injury, or illness during this event.

I give permission, without obligation or liability to me, for the use of my name, image or other record of my taking part in the GGTA North Shore Bike Ride for any promotional or publicity purposes.

I will obey traffic rules, heed officials' advice, and ride and conduct myself with due caution and respect, so as not to endanger anyone or disrupt the enjoyment of fellow cyclists, motorists or others. I agree to wear a properly fitted hard shell (ANSI, Snell approved) bicycle helmet at all times when riding a bicycle at this event.

My signature indicates that I have read this waiver and agree with its intent (**all riders must sign**):

Signature _____ Date _____

Signature _____ Date _____

Under 18? Have adult sign below:

Signature _____ Date _____

Are you a Gitchi-Gami Trail Association member?

____ Yes ____ No

If not, please consider joining the GGTA to support our effort to construct, maintain, and promote an 88-mile recreational trail between Two Harbors and Grand Marais, MN, along Lake Superior's North Shore.

____ Individual - \$20 per year

____ Family - \$35 per year

____ Life membership - \$500

Total amount enclosed \$ _____

Make checks payable to the GGTA and send with waiver and registration form to:

**Gitchi-Gami Trail Association
PO Box 74**

Silver Bay, MN 55614

... or register online at www.ggta.org.



Gitche-Gami Trail Association

PO Box 74

Silver Bay, MN 55614

And the winner is . . .

Dave Hawkinson of Scandia and Grand Marais! Well, almost. In the “name the newsletter” contest, his entry was the “North Shore Trail Wrider.” Very cute, we thought (“writer” + “rider” = “wrider”). But a bit obscure, perhaps. Still, we liked the “rider” idea — though we thought “Gitche-Gami” should be in the name. SO, as the entrant with the name closest to what we chose, Dave wins the water bottle! Congratulations!

Gitche-Gami Trail Association Board of Directors

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Ride into History!



This year's annual ride will give cyclists a unique opportunity to tour Split Rock Lighthouse as part of the registration fee on ride day (see full information inside).

The lighthouse was commissioned in 1910, built as a result of a single storm on November 28, 1905, that damaged 29 ships. The lighthouse station closed in 1969, when modern navigation technology made light-houses obsolete. The state acquired the lighthouse, and it is now operated as a historic site by the Minnesota

Historical Society. It was designated a National Historic Landmark in 2011.

Today visitors can explore four buildings on the property, including the restored lighthouse, the oil house, and the fog signal building, as well as the restored lighthouse keeper's house; can take in the magnificent lake views from the top of the cliff; and can immerse themselves in the fascinating history of Minnesota's iconic landmark.

In addition to free admission to the Split Rock Lighthouse historic site on ride day, ride registration also includes free entry to state parks, so riders can explore the two parks traversed by the GGST — Gooseberry Falls and Split Rock. Maps and information about both parks, and nearby Tettegouche State Park, will be given to riders to help maximize the North Shore experience.

Even though road closures will limit ride routes to the GGST this year, we hope bicyclists will be attracted to the 14th Annual Ride, with the opportunity to explore gems of the North Shore as a part of ride day activities.