FALL 2026

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A PUBLICATION OF THE GITCHI-GAMI TRAIL ASSOCIATION

GITCHI-GAMI TRAIL RIDER



AUTUMN ON THE TRAIL: A MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT

As the birches turn gold and the wind off Lake Superior takes on its autumn edge, the Gitchi-Gami State Trail is at its most beautiful. It's a fitting season to look back with gratitude and ahead with purpose. On behalf of the GGTA Board of Directors, thank you. Your memberships, donations, and energy at August's North Shore Bike Ride & Roll keep this trail moving forward.

As the year closes, I'm asking for your help with a special need. Our Executive Director, Michelle Pierson, works under an annual services contract with the Arrowhead Regional Development Commission (ARDC). The contract that began July 1, 2026, adds 54 hours of her time and covers rising costs, an increase of $4,464. After $12,000 in grants, $22,855 must come from our fund balance, a gap that will steadily draw down our reserves without your support.

GITCHI-GAMI STATE TRAIL

Michelle's work is the engine behind the trail's progress. She builds relationships with legislators to advocate for state bonding, helps secure grants for new construction and maintenance, and coordinates with the MnDNR, MnDOT, and local partners. She also keeps members and the media informed, organizes the North Shore Ride & Roll, and manages our day-to-day operations.

Your membership and gifts keep that momentum going. Please consider donating during our Give to the Max Day campaign, November 1–19. Find out how you can double your gift on page 4. Thank you!

GIVE TO THE MAX! DOUBLE YOUR GIFT!

~Bruce Martinson, President, GGTA Board of Directors

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Many trail projects are falling into place!

In Lutsen, construction on the new trailhead began October 26. Nearby, the Arrowhead Electric to Steam Engine Road segment is in design, backed by $600,000 in Transportation Alternatives funding and $550,000 from the IRRRB. There has been excellent communication between MnDNR, MnDOT, and Lutsen Township. We know that this project is highly anticipated, and we'll share more updates as we get a better idea of a construction timeline.

The trail rehabilitation project between Gooseberry Falls and Iona's Beach/Twin Points goes out for bid this fall, with construction anticipated for next year. Design continues on the lakeside route from Superior Shores to Flood Bay, where state funding has been extended to 2028. For the Silver Bay to Tettegouche design/ alignment project, the DNR is contacting landowners about route options in Silver Bay.

Longtime DNR Parks & Trails development consultant Kent Skaar retired recently. He was a great advocate for the Gitchi-Gami State Trail and we wish him happy trails.

Nathan Moe is now the MnDNR's development consultant contact, and development consultant Scott Haugen will oversee state trail bridges. Welcome to both!

~ *Bethany Chaplin,* MnDNR, Area 2C Specialist, Parks & Trails



MNDNR REPORT



MNDOT REPORT

In August, MnDOT hosted a public meeting in Schroeder for a 2027 pavement resurfacing project and open house for a corridor study looking at future needs on Hwy 61 from Little Marais through Tofte. The 2027 project will improve the crossing and sidewalk connection between the Gitchi-Gami State Trail (GGST) and the existing sidewalk across Hwy 61 in Schroeder. Reconstruction of Hwy 61 in Two Harbors also starts in 2027. This project includes adding trail to connect Park Rd to 4th St in Two Harbors to complete the start of the GGST. More information about projects is available on the MnDOT website.

~ *Maren Webb,* Principal Planner, MnDOT D1

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S REPORT

I love fall on the trail! We've wrapped up a busy season that began with USA Today nominating the Gitchi-Gami as one of the 10 Best Recreational Trails in the U.S. Minnesotans love to vote, and the trail came in 3rd place. Imagine how it will fare once it's complete!

Although our push for state bonding funds fell short, our work with legislators paid off another way. Thanks largely to our board members' advocacy, the Iron Range Resources and Rehabilitation Board made its first-ever appropriation to a trail project, extending the trail's current end point into Lutsen's town center.

At the National Outdoor Recreation Conference, I shared real-life trail stories about how the Gitchi-Gami provides accessible outdoor adventure for all ages and stages.

At our annual North Shore Ride & Roll, rest-stop conversations reminded me how much this trail matters to people and how eagerly they hope for more miles.

In September, I joined William Kelley School's fifth graders on a 20-mile field trip ride. Students learned bike and trail safety, enjoyed science lessons at Split Rock Lighthouse State Park, and made lasting memories, a reminder of what this trail means to local residents.

Whether you're a local, a visitor, or simply a trail lover, thank you for supporting our work!

~ *Michelle Pierson,* Executive Director, GGTA



ANNUAL RIDE REPORT

On Saturday, August 15, 2026, the GGTA held its annual North Shore Ride & Roll on the Gitchi-Gami State Trail. The event offers riders a choice of route lengths, rest and snack stops, SAG support, bike mechanic support, and a ride T-shirt.

Despite a forecast calling for rain, we welcomed 110 riders, and they brought the sunshine! Volunteers reported great spirits all day. In our post-ride survey, riders praised our volunteers, and many thanked Spokengear for providing mechanic support at the start. Riders also appreciated our pre-ride email updates. And they asked us to keep the PB&Js and dill pickles coming at the Beaver Bay rest stop!

Making plans for 2027? Pencil in a supported ride with us on **Saturday, August 21, 2027**!



THANKS TO OUR BUSINESS SPONSORS!

Our work to advocate for the trail, host events, assist with grant writing, and teach students about bike and trail safety wouldn't be possible without our members and business sponsors. A big thank-you to the businesses below! We hope you'll support them this year, especially as you plan your holiday shopping.

- Adam Malmanger Photography
- American Business Solutions
- AmericInn Tofte
- Best Western Plus Superior Inn
- Black Beach by GrandStay of Silver Bay
- Castle Danger Brewery
- Cedaero
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- Schroeder Short Stop
- Sivertson Gallery
- Spokengear
- Two Harbors Federal Credit Union
- Visit Cook County
- WSB



OUR NEW JERSEY!

This fall, we teamed up with American Business Solutions to design this Gitchi-Gami State Trail jersey! We offered a first limited batch for sale, and we can't wait to see these jerseys out on the trail next season. If they're well received, we may open an online store next year for this and other trail apparel and gear. Stay tuned!



GITCHI-GAMI Trail Association

1130 11th Street • Two Harbors, MN 55616

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november 19, 2026

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FALL 2026

DOUBLE YOUR IMPACT ON GIVE TO THE MAX DAY 2026!

Minnesotans always give generously when GiveMN hosts its fundraising event, Give to the Max Day every fall. We hope you will include the GGTA among your donations this year. Every mile added to the trail forges real connections and makes a real impact on residents and visitors alike.

This year, members of the GGTA Board have created a **matching fund** for our Give to the Max Day campaign. Our goal is to raise $5,000, and if we reach it, generous board members will match up to $5,000. That means every gift you make on Give to the Max Day 2026 will have double the impact!

Early giving begins on November 1 and runs through the big day:
Thursday, November 19, 2026.

gtmd
november 19, 2026

Each gift through the platform opens opportunities to win an added amount called a “Golden Ticket”. Maybe this will be our year?!

Follow us on social media for campaign updates and thanks in advance for considering helping us make this goal!

Visit our GTMD organization page to learn more & donate:
www.givemn.org/organization/Gitchi-Gami-Trail-Association

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