

Thunder Bay Trails News

Volume 1, Issue 2

Newsletter of The Thunder Bay Trails Association

August 1997

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 so as to reflect their recreational significance for the enjoyment, education and adventure for its area citi-

- **Every Wednesday,**
6:30 p.m. - Mtn. Bike Ride at Chippewa Hills Pathway
- **July 31,** 7:00 p.m.
Trail Planning Meeting - Brad Vauter's Home
- **August 12,** 7:00 - 9:00 p.m. - TBTA Monthly Meeting - ACC Center Building, Room 106
- **August 16,** 2:30 p.m. - TBTA picnic and Hike - Negwegon State Park
- **September 9,** 7:00 - 9:00 p.m. - TBTA Monthly Meeting - ACC Center Building, Room 106

Trail Link to Norway Ridge Pathway Proposed

Imagine being able to walk, run, bike, or ski down a secluded pathway from Alpena High School to Norway Ridge Pathway. This may become a reality in the next one to two years if private officials, public officials, and TBTA planners are able to coordinate efforts to acquire an approximate three mile section of old, unused railroad corridor.

The railroad grade currently runs through Alpena, past Alpena High School and ends at Paxton Quarry on M-32. Lafarge Corporation used to utilize the railway to haul shale from Paxton Quarry to their

cement plant in Alpena. Lafarge changed their cement production process a few years ago and no longer uses the railway or Paxton Quarry.

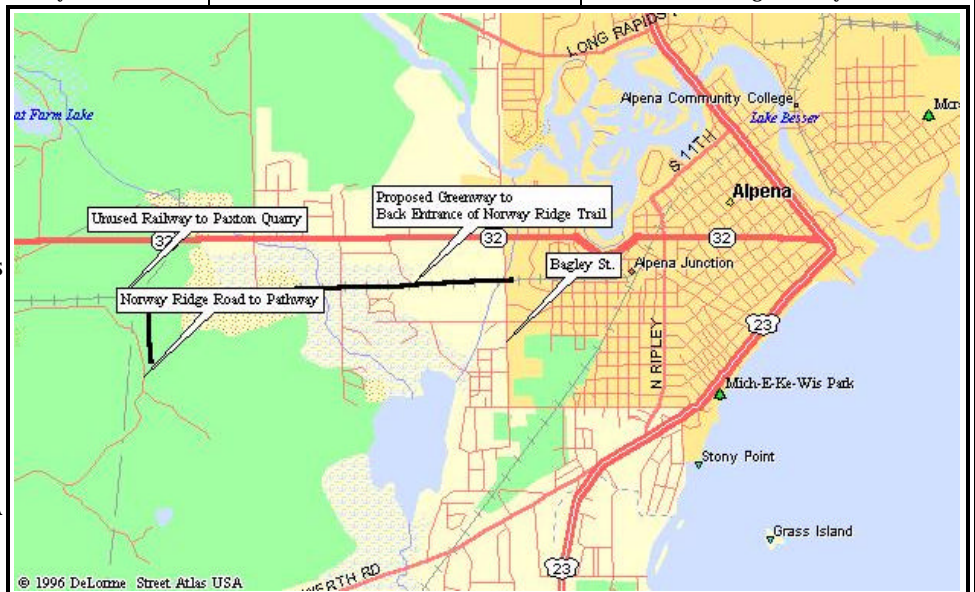
So far, TBTA and the Alpena Snowmobiling As-

sociation have been the only organizations to express interest in acquiring the unused railway. The snowmobile association would like to use the railway starting at Tamarack road and create a trail link to Hillman.

On July 8, TBTA planners, township officials and Laura Cruise of the Rails to Trails Conservancy met with Carl Just, Communications Officer for Lafarge, to discuss acquisition of the three mile section of railway from Alpena (cont. on page 2)

Planning Committee Formed

Various TBTA members have volunteered their time and expertise to develop a master plan for the various trail systems (Chippewa Hills, Norway Ridge, proposed Rockport trails, Thompson Harbor, and Negwegon trails) that the association has decided to adopt. They hope to develop and coordinate a plan with the MDNR, and township and county officials that will assist with the development and management of the areas trail systems. Interested members may attend the next meeting on July 31.



The TBTA is working with Lafarge Corp., Lake State Railway, and city and township planning officials to develop a trail to Norway Ridge Pathway.

TBTA Summer and Fall Activities

We have scheduled events throughout the summer and are in the progress of planning events for this fall. Each event (see schedule on first page) centers around the various trail systems our organization has decided to adopt. For example, if you like mountain biking attend the group ride every Wednesday at 6:30 p.m. at Chippewa Hills. This fall we plan on having a trail work bee and membership drive.

TBTA Affiliates With MMBA

This past spring at our monthly meeting in May, Dwain Abramowski, Executive Director of the Michigan Mountain Biking Association, spoke with TBTA about affiliating with MMBA. The MMBA has been recognized at the national level as being one of the most politically active and progressive trail groups in the country. The MMBA promotes responsible mountain biking and works toward goals of common land access and natural resource protection through interaction with policy makers. The TBTA decided to affiliate with the MMBA because of their active lobbying efforts and trail management expertise.



Trail Link to Norway Ridge Pathway Proposed (cont. from page 1)

to the state forest land. TBTA hopes to utilize the railway for a non-motorized pathway or greenway to the back entrance of Norway Ridge Trail. Carl Just was very supportive of the Association's plan, but recommended the owners and managers of the railroad, Lake State Railway, be contacted. Laura Cruise of the nationally recognized Rails to Trails Conservancy suggested that if a railway has not been maintained or utilized for a year or more then the



railway can be considered abandoned. She also stated that almost 10,000 miles of rail-trails have been created across the country. "Rail-trails serve as historic and wildlife conservation corridors, linking isolated parks and creating greenways through developed areas. They also stimulate local economies by increasing tourism and promoting local business."

The TBTA is using the same elements of a 1993 plan developed by the MDNR and Alpena Chamber of Commerce recreation committee and feels that if the railroad corridor can be acquired for non-motorized use, then it will be a 'win-win' situation for the people of Alpena county. Anyone interested in assisting with the trail link proposal may contact Vince Call.

Rockport Recreation Area to Become a

The townships of Alpena and Presque Isle have been working on developing a plan for a multi-use recreational area north of Alpena along Lake Huron. The proposed recreational area, known as Rockport to many locals, consists of a public boat launch, mine tailings from an abandoned limestone quarry, forested roads and trails, limestone sinkholes, and miles of secluded sandy beaches. The Thunder Bay Trails Association became interested in assisting with the planning when various members of TBTA felt that the Rockport area had numerous trails and natural features that would make it a unique non-motorized trail network for the public.

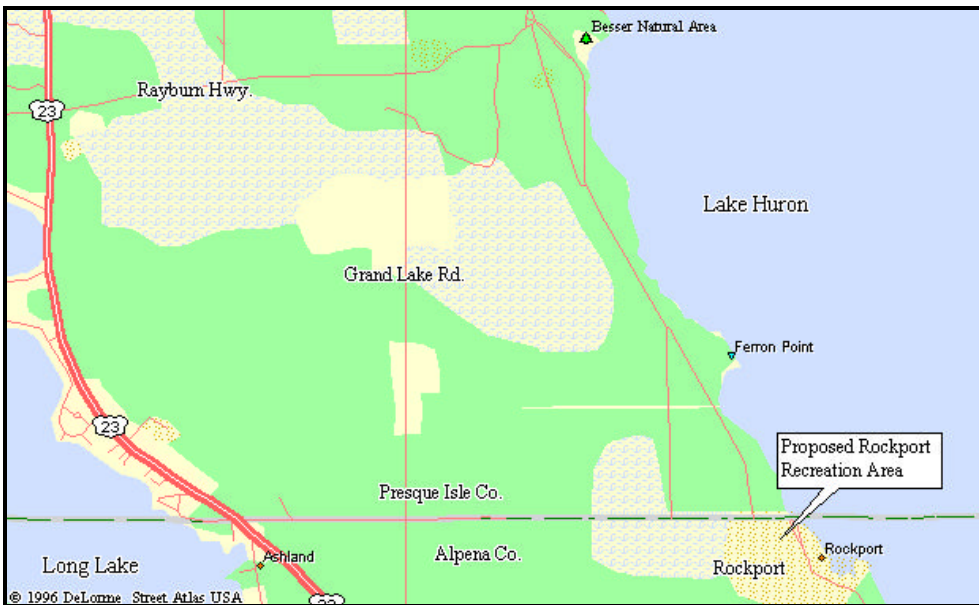
Much of Rockport, excluding the public boat launch, used to be owned by Consumers Power Company and until recently was closed to the public. The State of Michigan acquired the Rockport area from Consumers Power Company through a land swap; the land swap was part of a legal settlement between the State of Michigan and Consumers Power. Even though the area was owned by Consumers Power for approximately twenty years, it remains very secluded and undeveloped. It consists of property that crosses from Alpena County to Presque Isle County, borders Lake Huron and extends to Besser Bell Pines area.

The Rockport area has a very unique history and many natural resources. It

used to be an active limestone quarry, consisted of a small village, had ship loading docks and a railroad. It eventually ceased mining operations in the mid-1950s. According to Vince Call, Rockport was even featured on a television documentary about the construction of the Mackinac Bridge; the huge cement pilings holding the suspension towers of the bridge were constructed and shipped from Rockport. After the mining operations ceased and the villagers left, the land was virtually reclaimed by nature. Richard Barber, a forest technician with the Michigan Department of Natural Resources, is currently doing a forest and land analysis of Rockport and described the reclaimed land as having such unique,

“Nature has miraculously found a way to reclaim itself in a once strip-mined quarry.”

natural features that it is like going to another planet. Nature has miraculously found a way to reclaim itself in a once strip-mined quarry. Trees have found a way to root themselves in bare limestone and in split boulders and aquatic animals have learned to survive in small lime kilns at the bottom of the quarry. Further away from the quarry, deep in hardwood forests, lies a series of secluded limestone sinkholes, many of them filled with water. With all the history and natural resources that exist in the Rockport area, much needs to be discussed and planned so that the area is managed properly and certain areas made available through non-motorized recreation. We will keep you posted on the progress of the planning for Rockport.



The proposed Rockport Recreation Area will have boundaries that extend into Alpena and Presque Isle County and has the potential to link with a trail to Besser Bell.

TBTA Filing For Non-Profit Status

One of the first goals our young organization is trying to accomplish is to gain 501(c)3 non-profit status with the federal and state government. This will assist with our tax filing status, gaining private and public donations, and in applying for grants. Brad Vauter, new to the Alpena area and a Legal Aide Attorney with the State of Michigan, is volunteering his professional expertise by filling out the applications for non-profit status. Brad has very diverse experience with non-profit groups. We will keep you posted on the progress of this venture.

TBTA Has New Logo

Finally, TBTA has a logo that can be recognized and observed by its members and the public. The logo below was created by Jeff Blumenthal for the TBTA in hopes of providing a symbol that when observed would clearly identify our group's mission and goals.



Thunder Bay Trails Association
 2700 Beebe Blvd.
 Ossineke, MI 49766



Postage



New Members Wanted:

If you have any family or friends that would like to become a member of the Thunder Bay Trails Association, please cut and fill out the New Members form and mail it to the address listed on the form.

New Members Wanted:

SEND TO:
 Thunder Bay Trails Association
 2700 Beebe Blvd.
 Ossineke, MI 49766

Name _____
 Address _____
 City _____
 State _____
 ZIP/Postal Code _____
 Phone No. _____
 Recreational Interest _____

WE NEED YOUR HELP

If you haven't been attending the monthly meetings or TBTA activities, please try to help us out in other ways. This fall we will be scheduling various work bees at Norway Ridge Pathway and Chippewa Hills Pathway and will need many "hands-on" volunteers to clear brush and debris from trails. We will also be scheduling fundraisers and a membership drive. Currently, the activities,

promotion, and mailings are funded by existing funds from the Different Spokes Bicycle Club (Different Spokes members decided to merge their organization with TBTA because of mutual interests). We hope to generate funds to continue communication efforts with our Association members and maintain other operational costs. We will be requesting each member make an individual or family contribution to the Thunder Bay Trails