

Trail Talk

By Steve Litts, Executive Director
Dickinson County Trails Board

ADOPT A TRAIL

We have two trails that need a caring person, business or organization to adopt. Adoption is a two-year commitment to clean the trail of any trash twice a year: just before Memorial Day and just after Labor Day. DCTB identifies the adopting person or group with an attractive sign at each end of the trail segment. Contact us at 712 336-9312 or e-mail me at s.litts@mchsi.com to receive an application form. Adopt now so your sign will be in place for the start of the season.

WANT TO PLAN A CYCLING TRIP?

Thanks to Joann Asa, a Jackson County trails member for bringing this new, personalized planning tool to our attention. Google Maps now provides an option for creating biking directions using bike lanes and bike trail data for 150 U.S. cities. The new feature helps bikers determine the best, most efficient bike routes and allows riders to customize their trip, according to a posting on Google's Web site. The feature makes use of bike lanes and dedicated bike trails where they are available and calculates "rider-friendly" routes that avoid big hills.

Users select "Bicycling" from the drop-down [menu](#) when doing a directions search. Maps customized for bikers show dedicated bike lanes along roads (outlined in light green) and roads designated as preferred for biking (dashed green lines), but without dedicated lanes, according to product manager Shannon Guymon. Time estimates for bike routes are based on "a complex set of variables" such as road type, terrain and the number of turns.

The maps also show 12,000 miles of bike-only trails, information generated through Google's partnership with the Rails-to-Trails Conservancy. More information can be found at <http://maps.google.com/biking>.

BECOME A FRIEND OF THE TRAILS

Over the last five years your DCTB has been successful bringing seven grants to Dickinson County. These grants funded the bulk of the costs for two trail projects on the west side of Big Spirit Lake; the Wahpeton and Garlock Slough Trails on the west side of West Lake; the Silver Lake Trail; a major renovation of the original Spine Trail, scheduled for this summer; and the Okoboji Foundation grant helped make the Bay Harbor Trail a reality last fall. The majority of these grants require 20-30% local match and that's where your membership in the Friends of the Trails is critical. Over \$1M in Friends donations provided the "local match" dollars necessary to attract these grants that funded 70-80% of the total costs. An easy way to state the impact of your Friends membership is this: For every dollar you donate, we get an additional \$3 of grant support from outside the county. I had the pleasure of meeting Jean and Randy Graff, members of the Friends of the Trails. Like many of us, Jean and Randy are getting geared up for another season on the Iowa Great Lakes Trails. They noted that they have new bikes but kept their old ones for visitors. A great idea!

We thank Jean and Randy and the five hundred current Friends of the Trails who have pledged and donated from the \$25/year Individual membership up to the \$100K Founder membership. All members are welcomed and appreciated. Not a Friends Member yet? Joining is easy. Go to <http://www.co.dickinson.ia.us/departments/Trails/WebDonorCard.pdf> print and fill out the form and mail it today. You'll receive a sincere THANK YOU from us, and you'll have the satisfaction of knowing each time you're on or pass by a trail that you made a meaningful contribution to the quality of life in the Iowa Great Lakes. Of course, your donation is tax deductible.

BID LETTING DATES SET

We now have bid letting dates for two new trail projects this summer. The Garlock Slough Trail project bids will be opened on April 12th at West Okoboji's City Hall; and the Silver Lake Trail project bids will be opened on April 27th at Lake Park's City Hall.

SPRING THAW

As the song says, "How high's the water, momma?" We're keeping an eye on the snowmelt, especially around the Bay Harbor Trail. Prior to construction of the trail, dirt and vegetation built up around the west end of the culvert over the years, retarding the flow of water to the east side. The earthwork returned the slope of the ditch to the original Iowa DOT specifications as required. The grass that was planted last fall will need some time to develop and we will build several rock check dams this spring. The combination of the check dams and the new grass will slow the flow of water from the west side of Hwy. 86 to the east side, but with the large amount of snow that accumulated this winter, some unwanted flow can be expected at many places around the lakes.

That's the news for this month. Be checking next month's column and our website for additional information on trail construction and activities. (<http://www.co.dickinson.ia.us/> and click on Trails Board) Until then, as always, Happy Trails to you and yours.