

Trail Talk

By Steve Litts, Executive Director
Dickinson County Trails Board

HISTORIC TRAIL EVENT

As reported recently in the media, your Dickinson County Trails Board and the Osceola County Conservation Board, with the assistance of the Iowa Natural Heritage Foundation and the Iowa Trails Council, has successfully negotiated the purchase of thirty-seven miles of railroad property between Superior and Allendorf. The property will be placed in the federal Rails to Trails program that will retain a rail transportation corridor option for the two counties. Because negotiations resulted in a purchase price lower than the appraised value, DCTB and OCCB have submitted grant requests that allow us to use the appraised/sale price difference as our local match. Thus, the grants will fund the purchase without any local, out-of-pocket dollars.

The new trail corridor will be in the adjoining right-of-way of the abandoned rail system and ultimately will extend from a mile west of Superior all the way to Sibley. It will provide multi-purpose recreational opportunities including cycling, walking, jogging, inline skating, snowmobiling and hunting. As trail enthusiasts come to the area to enjoy the truly marvelous prairie vistas along the route, the trail will also open up economic growth opportunities for creative entrepreneurs in towns along the route. If you're familiar with the Root River Trail in SW Minnesota you know what a cyclists' destination that area has become. Towns along our new trail could become the Lanesboro, Minnesota's of Iowa.

Prior to our purchase, the IANW RR had entered into a five-year agreement with the Standard Railroad Corporation of Nevada to store rail cars on part of this route between Orleans to a mile west of Superior. At the end of that storage contract, all cars, rails, and ties will be removed. We've spoken with the owner of the car storage company, and he assures us that cars will not be stored in town or by the lake where they would be visible. As our trail construction won't go eastward during that period, the storage agreement will not interfere with our trail construction schedule.

SUMMER CONSTRUCTION UPDATE

The work on the **Bay Harbor Trail** along Hwy. 86 is on schedule. Approximately 50% of the concrete trail work is complete. Last week a person shared that he had visited the construction site and was amazed at the complexity of the work. He now has a better idea about why a typical mile of trail costs \$350,000. I encourage readers to visit the site.

The design approval process for the **Garlock Slough Trail** is moving forward. Iowa DOT engineers have visited the site and the requested design details have been sent. This trail will be a key segment of DCTB's plan for a trail along the west side of West Lake Okoboji. We had expected this trail to be completed this fall, but the Iowa DOT now anticipates a December bid letter for construction next spring. We're very excited about the trail the myriad of natural wonders to be discovered by trail users between Three

Cross Road and the Emerson Bay State Recreation Area.

The City of Lake Park recently hired Beck Engineering to do the final design work on the **Silver Lake Trail**. We're expecting a bid letting in January/February with construction next spring. Some grading work is already being done.

Maintenance projects have been affected by the deluge of stimulus-funded construction projects this summer. This has delayed our major trail renovation projects, but the Iowa DOT anticipates our project will be let for bids in December with construction next spring. We anticipate projects such as painting of crosswalks, drainage work on the trail behind the old Standard in Okoboji and improving the drainage on the trail east of the Kart Ranch will be completed before winter arrives.

EVENTS

Thanks to all 164 participants in the first **Stateline Ride**, held August 1st. The weather was great, the food even better and the fellowship the best! Also, a big DCTB thanks to the Mau family, Dr. Bill Phelps, Kirk Stauss and to all the folks who made this year's **Totes for Trails** (Purse Auction) a huge success.

Though fall isn't far away, the trail season in the Iowa Great Lakes has more to offer: **U. of Okoboji Oktoberfest Ride**, September 26th; and **Tails on the Trails**, October 4th.

BENCHES

Six new benches have been placed on the East Okoboji Slough, Upper Gar State Park and the Wahpeton trails. Thanks to all who have provided these rest areas along the Iowa Great Lakes Trails so all can pause and soak in the marvelous scenes offered there. The benches are a thoughtful way to honor family and community people who have played a significant role in your lives. If you are interested in placing a bench on the trail, contact Yvonne Taylor at 712 336-4843 or myself at s.litts@mchsi.com.

Our beautiful summer is fast disappearing, but the lovely, crisp fall days are just around the corner bringing continued opportunities to savor the beauty of the lakes area as seen from our trails. Be checking future columns and our web site at <http://www.co.dickinson.ia.us/departments/trailsboard.asp> for additional news on trail construction and activities. Until then, as always, Happy Trails to you and yours.