

## **Trail Talk**

By Steve Litts, Executive Director  
Dickinson County Trails Board

Welcome back to Trail Talk, the public information link to your Dickinson County Trails Board (DCTB). With this morning's -23 F and tons of snow outside, trails may not be in your thoughts today, but as we all survive these blustery days, your Trails Board has been actively assessing our trail needs and opportunities.

At our annual retreat this month the Trails Board received status reports on the current trail projects:

### BAY HARBOR TRAIL

The Iowa Department of Transportation (IDOT) has authorized submittal of final plans with permit application. Reviews have been done by their District Office in Sioux City and their Bridge Design Department in Ames. Final plans and specifications have been submitted, and we anticipate letting a request for bids very soon.

### GARLOCK SLOUGH TRAIL

The topographic survey of the route has been completed and a drawing of the proposed route has been submitted to the Iowa Department of Natural Resources (IDNR.) Once IDNR rules on the acceptability of the route, plans will be submitted to the IDOT for their approval. The decision could be delayed until summer to reflect any changes to the forms and processes brought about by the IDNR requested changes in the Iowa Code. As reported earlier, the City of West Okoboji and DCTB have already been awarded a grant for this trail.

### SILVER LAKE TRAIL

Phase 1 - a grant has been awarded for the portion of the trail following a route previously rough graded through Silver Lake Park. A second grant has been requested for an additional section of trail with the announcement of awards expected in February. Phase 2 - will connect Phase 1 from the west side of Silver Lake north to the railroad. Phase 3 - will use the railroad bed to bring the trail back into town. Phase 4 - will connect the Silver Lake Trail to the other trails in the county.

### RENOVATION OF EXISTING TRAILS

A comprehensive maintenance program was adopted by your DCTB, subject to final approval by the County Board of Supervisors. The plan includes full-depth patching, leveling, crack patching and a 1" overlay of asphalt to 12,800 feet of the original spine trail and preventative maintenance to an additional 10,380 feet of trails. One example of a maintenance project would be the much-needed drainage and surface improvements to the short section of trail behind the old Okoboji City Hall and just north of Mau Marine. This was once a city street but was turned over to the trails when it was abandoned by the city. The reshaping of this section of trail will make it safer by prohibiting car and truck traffic and will improve drainage flow to neighboring properties. Access to residents will not be affected.

At our recent annual retreat, your Trails Board reviewed several options for new trails. Each possible trail was evaluated on the following criteria: Practicality – is an easement for construction possible; Impact – how many people are going to be affected; Cost – how economical will the construction be; Integration – how does this trail fit into the existing system; Timing – does this serve an immediate, mid-term or long-term need; and Safety – would this satisfy a high, average or low concern for safety?

A recent comprehensive report in The Dickinson County News noted the DCTB is in negotiations to acquire the IANW Railroad that is being abandoned. The Board's study revealed the status of this railroad purchase is a major factor in determining priorities. For example, if we are successful in obtaining the railroad, the completion of the Silver Lake Trail moves to the top of the priority list, but if the railroad purchase does not materialize, the Yarnes Wildlife Management Trail becomes the first priority.

Other trails in the mix (not listed by ranking) include Center Lake area, Jones Pasture, railroad west from Spirit Lake, Pioneer Beach Road, Elinore Bedell State Park Trail connection to Hwy. 9, Emerson Bay to Lutheran Camp, Kenue Park to Lakeshore Dr. and the railroad from Spirit Lake east. As you can see, your Dickinson County Trails Board continues to expand your recreational trail opportunities.

That concludes another issue of Trail Talk. We'll hope the annual January thaw has moved in by the time you're reading this column...but not so much as to impede the area Winter Games festivities. From the looks of it, the Lakes will have great weather for the games this year. Until next month, as always, Happy Trails to you and yours.