

Trail Talk

By Steve Litts, Executive Director
Dickinson County Trails Board

BAY HARBOR UPDATE

Stop the presses! This column was written, but this news can't wait. The long-awaited D.O.T. permit for the Bay Harbor Trail has arrived! It took over two years of planning, fundraising and permit seeking to get here but construction can finally begin on the Bay Harbor Trail. Bids will be sought and acted on at DCTB's regular meeting in May. Work will begin on the trail portion during the summer, and the trail will be opened after the tunnels are installed in September.

SILVER LAKE and GARLOCK SLOUGH TRAILS

The Bay Harbor Trail is one of three trails DCTB is targeting for construction this summer/fall. The other two are the first segment of the Silver Lake Trail, in Lake Park, and the Garlock Slough Trail along the west side of West Lake Okoboji. Construction timelines will be dependent on the permit process of the Iowa Department of Transportation and the Iowa Department of Natural Resources, as we will be using portions of their right-of-way to locate the trail.

WE COULDN'T DO IT WITHOUT OUR VOLUNTEERS

As trail users again enjoy our outstanding trails, we are pleased to recognize the many volunteers who continue to work enthusiastically supporting the beauty and growth our trail system. It's through their dedication that all of us can enjoy beautiful sights along our trails. Adopt-a-Trail participants include the following:

Herman Richter family; Norm and Stella Winter; Georgia Sheley and Barb Nordblad; Ron and Pat Knutson; Carol and Norm Herzog; Wayne and Barb Woodley; Cenna Vaelli; Milford Cub Scouts; Lakes Area Girl Scouts; Beta Sigma Phi; Northwest Federal, Okoboji; Polaris Industries; Bank Midwest; Spirit Lake Education Association; Lakes Area Boy Scouts and the Erin Reed family. Also, thanks to the S.A.L.T. trail riders who stop to pick up stray paper as they patrol our trails from Memorial Day through September. A big DCTB THANKS to all for making our trails a great experience for residents and visitors.

SAFETY

Ride safely – be an aware of cyclist! While visiting in Iowa City recently, I came upon a serious accident involving a cyclist and a car. DCTB is passionate about safety as readers of this column know. The sight of the crumpled bicycle and the shattered rear window was a stark reminder of the ever-present need for safe cycling and motoring habits. Both vehicles have a right to the road, as do pedestrians. But with that right also comes responsibilities. Be constantly aware of traffic. Use common sense, courtesy and a commitment to share the road. It's the law! And it can make a life or death difference, most especially for the cyclist.

Bicycle safety bill stalls in the Iowa House. As a young teen, I used to bike across Cedar Rapids, through the busy downtown area all the way to the Cedar Rapids Country Club so I could caddy. In today's traffic, however, more street designs need to provide cyclists

with more designated safe zones for travel. Regulations promoting safe use of streets and roads also need to be modernized.

Thus it was disconcerting to us to read the following in the Iowa Bicycle Coalition's *Messenger* that the Iowa House leadership has refused to allow the Bicycle Safety Bill (SF 117) to be debated in the House despite its passage in the Iowa Senate by a 30-17 vote. If you think bicyclists deserve a safe space while being passed then consider making your feelings known to Speaker Pat Murphy, 515 281-5566, pat.murphy@legis.state.ia.us and Majority Leader Kevin McCarthy of Des Moines, 515 281-7497, kevin.mccarthy@legis.state.ia.us

SUMMER EVENTS for the IOWA GREAT LAKES TTAILS

DCTB is happy to announce some new events on the Iowa Great Lakes Trails this summer:

Character Counts for World Bicycle Relief Benefit Ride. May 31, 2009, starting at 2 pm from First Presbyterian Church parking lot, 3501 Hill Avenue, Spirit Lake, IA. Pre-register at www.charactercounts.kintera.org

The Stateline Ride, August 1st will celebrate the joining of the new, 2.5 mile extension of the Jackson County, MN, Loon Lake Trail to the Iowa Great Lakes Trails at Mini-Wakan State Park. Choices of rides include a five-mile family ride, a 20 mile or a 40 mile bike ride. In addition to a meal, and commemorative T-shirt and entertainment, interpretive talks will be given about the restoration project at Mini-Wakan State Park. This is one you will want to attend.

The Green Wave committee is adding a 5K walk, a 10 K run, and 20 and 40K bike routes to their event this summer. Look for more on this two-day event, August 15th and 16th. It promises to provide lots of fun for all levels of participation.

WE'RE ON THE WEB

Remember, you can now find a list of trail maps, events, board agendas and minutes of our meetings, and much more on the Dickinson County Website. Bookmark <http://www.co.dickinson.ia.us/> and click on Trails Board to keep informed.

Until next month, as always, Happy Trails to you and yours.