



Montana News



The Great Northern Rail Trail winds through Flathead County west of Kalispell

Recent Successes

New trail network envisioned for the Flathead Valley

With leadership from RTCA, Flathead County's People for Athletics, Travel, Health and Safety (PATHS) Advisory Committee has completed a trails master plan that aims to connect upper Flathead Valley communities with the region's numerous natural features, including Glacier National Park, Flathead Lake, and Flathead National Forest. The trails plan, a year and a half in the making, is a giant stride forward for the area, which has one of the fastest population growth rates in Montana.

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"Gary's expertise, passion, leadership, and dedication has created the cohesiveness that such a daunting project needs. We would never have been able to make the progress we've made so far without his guidance and leadership."

-Johanna Bangeman, Chair of PATHS committee,
Flathead Trails Project, 2009

ABOUT US

The Rivers, Trails, and Conservation Assistance (RTCA) Program is the community assistance arm of the National Park Service. RTCA staff provides technical assistance to community groups and local, state, and federal government agencies working to protect natural areas and water resources and enhance close-to-home outdoor recreation opportunities. We help communities plan, organize partnerships, and achieve on-the-ground success on projects they initiate.



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PROJECTS AND PARTNERS 2010

CURRENT PROJECTS

1. Flathead County Trails
Flathead County
2. Hillcrest Natural Area
Consolidated City-County of Butte-Silver Bow
3. Jocko Valley Trails
Jocko Valley Trails Committee
4. Fort Belknap Trails
Fort Belknap Indian Community
5. Scobey Trails
Montana Nutrition and Physical Activity Program
6. Belgrade to Bozeman Connection
Gallatin County Parks and Trails Committee

Find out more about each project starting on page 3.

Recent Successes cont.

The new plan envisions a safe and convenient network of paths, bike lanes, shoulder bikeways and backcountry trails that connect communities, schools, parks and public lands in Flathead County. The trail network will connect population hubs for safe and efficient commuting, provide physical activity opportunities on close-to-home recreational trails, ensure convenient and safe routes to school, and provide high-quality, non-motorized recreational trails on public lands.

The plan recommends a public-private partnership, led by Flathead County, to administer the new trails program. It also emphasizes the importance of trail maintenance. The plan's implementation schedule identifies high-priority trails and capitalizes on opportunities to develop new miles of trail as lands are developed and roads upgraded.

As the trails plan was developed, several other local trail projects made significant advances:

- Rails to Trails of Northwest Montana built two footbridges of recycled plastic and paved one mile of trail, extending the Great Northern Rail-Trail to 16 miles.
- Foy's to Blacktail Trails Inc. took steps to acquire a key parcel near the trailhead of its proposed 20-mile backcountry trail across county, federal and private timber lands.
- A Trail Runs Though It, a state/city/private partnership, is building the first 10 miles of a planned 75-mile, single-track bicycle recreation trail around Whitefish, MT, as part of a larger land protection effort.
- The Old Steel Bridge was purchased and donated to the Flathead Valley Community College's effort (in partnership with a citizen group) to develop a Stillwater River trail

"RTCA is an invaluable asset for community groups with limited resources but grand ideas."

-Michael Kustudia,
Milltown Superfund Redevelopment Working Group, 2008

Milltown restoration begins; redevelopment next

The last trainload of contaminated sediment was removed from the old Milltown Reservoir in September 2009. All told, more than 3 million tons were removed in two years. With remediation of this Superfund site nearly complete, restoration of the Clark Fork River channel and floodplain began in earnest in the fall. By the end of 2009, the 415 acres that once lay beneath the reservoir will transfer to state ownership for redevelopment, along with several smaller parcels, as a Montana state park. An



The last rail car of sediments from the Milltown Reservoir Superfund Site. Over 3,000,000 tons were shipped offsite by rail in just under two years, 2007-09.

additional 180 acres is proposed for acquisition in 2010, making nearly one square mile of new, publicly owned parkland. Two proposals for state and federal grants totaling \$3.5 million would pay for much of the state park redevelopment plan. RTCA provided several years of technical assistance to Missoula County in redevelopment planning.

During three volunteer work days in 2009, participants planted 320 native trees and shrubs, spread 37.5 yards of compost, and removed three pickup loads of trash and 440 pounds of scrap metal from the site near the new pedestrian bridge. In addition, 160 participants competed in the community's first "Superfun" Run on the new trail in Bonner/Piltzville.

Virginia City trail nears completion

A 1.3-mile, crushed-rock interpretive trail connecting Virginia City and Nevada City is nearly complete. Two depot buildings that serve an operating, narrow-gauge railway act as trailhead facilities and interpretive doorways to Virginia City's original frontier mining town and the reconstructed town of Nevada City. RTCA provided technical assistance in designing the trail. The project was awarded an NPS Challenge Cost Share grant.



Virginia City trailhead at the curatorial center

Current Projects

1. Flathead County Trails

Project Partner: Flathead County
RTCA Contact: Gary Weiner
Location: Flathead County

Project Goal

Develop and implement a long-range master plan for a countywide trail system that links communities and schools to each other and to Flathead Lake, Glacier National Park, Flathead National Forest, and state and county parks.

RTCA Role

Provide expertise in trail system planning, development and administration, guidance in transitioning from planning to implementation, and help in identifying sources of funding and technical resources.



Fort Belknap powwow grounds and potential trail location

2. Hillcrest Natural Area

Project Partner: Consolidated City-County of Butte-Silver Bow
RTCA Contact: Gary Weiner
Location: Butte

Project Goal

Rehabilitate the 60-acre Hillcrest Natural Area for use as a public park.

RTCA Role

Assist with development and implementation of a community-supported site design, including provisions for creek restoration, a kid's fishing pond, trails, a hang gliding landing zone, and a dog park. Conduct community outreach, including facilitating stakeholder and public meetings.



Creek restoration needed at Hillcrest Natural Area

3. Jocko Valley Trails

Project Partner: Jocko Valley Trails Committee
RTCA Contact: Gary Weiner
Location: Missoula & Lake Counties

Project Goal

Develop a 20-mile trail between Evaro and Ravalli, and a 12-mile trail between Jocko Canyon and Valley Creek.

RTCA Role

Provide guidance to cooperators in creating community consensus, designing trail alignments, and mobilizing resources.

4. Fort Belknap Trails

Project Partner: Fort Belknap Indian Community
RTCA Contact: Gary Weiner
Location: Little Rocky Mountains in Fort Belknap Indian Reservation

Project Goal

Develop trails in the Little Rocky Mountains near the communities of Hays and Lodgepole to provide opportunities for recreation and physical activity, to improve health, to

We're Here For You.

Could your project benefit from RTCA Staff Assistance? Contact us to find out.

Gary Weiner

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2009 Nationwide Partnership Success

3,441 Miles of Trail Developed

2,664 Miles of River Conserved

87,385 Acres of Open Space and Parkland Protected

97% Percentage of Community Partners Satisfied

Find more information online at

www.nps.gov/rtca



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Current Projects cont.

serve as outdoor classrooms, to assist with fire prevention, and to attract tourism.

RTCA Role

Provide expertise in planning, designing, maintaining, and managing backcountry trails. Assist with public outreach activities. Provide technical support in developing a trails brochure and identifying sources of funding and other resources needed to implement trails recommendations.

5. Scobey Trails

Project Partner: Montana Nutrition and Physical Activity Program

RTCA Contact: Gary Weiner

Location: Northeast Montana

Project Goal

Develop trails connecting key locations in the Town of Scobey, a kids fishing pond on 7 acres of state land, and a recreational rail-trail beginning one mile out of town.

RTCA Role

Provide expertise to organize and conduct a trail planning process, and to plan and design a children's fishing pond. Assist in identifying funding and other resources.

“RTCA staff’s expert technical assistance, facilitation skills, and strong commitment to the project have been tremendous assets to the Milltown Redevelopment Working Group.”

-Peter Nielsen, Missoula City-County Health Dept, 2008



Potential trail corridor in Scobey

6. Belgrade to Bozeman Connection

Project Partner: Gallatin County Parks and Trails Committee

RTCA Contact: Gary Weiner

Location: Between Belgrade & Bozeman

Project Goal

A Belgrade-to-Bozeman arterial trail 6 to 12 miles long providing safe transit and recreational opportunities, with the potential addition of 60 to 160 acres of park land.

RTCA Role

Contact stakeholders, coalesce project support, form a citizen's committee, and establish the framework of a long-term planning process.