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Through the Gateway

Volume 25 Issue 2 Fall—Winter 2017

Presidents Letter Fall-Winter 2017

I love the change of seasons along the trail. This fall was an especially beautiful and extended one. In winter, fewer use the trail, but the heartiest of us bundle up and continue to bike, walk, run, or ride horse. Some take to skis, snowshoes, and fat tire bikes. Whatever your transportation mode, it is always a joy to be on the Gateway and Browns Creek Trails.

Your association committees have had a busy summer working to improve the trail experience and membership processes. On September 16th we participated in the Brown's Creek Watershed event at Brown's Creek Park, a large and fun event. Then on September 23rd, we held a trails day survey event at the Arlington Gardens wayside, on the western St. Paul end of the Gateway. Many excellent contacts were made as we sought to better understand the needs of trail users in that area. In other news, we made it into the modern era with our memberships; credit cards are now accepted for payment! Thank you to Beth Hayden and MN Parks and Trails for this upgrade. We also plan to upgrade our trail brochure and map, which are outdated. The rollout of this is expected by spring.

A cooperative venture was started this summer with the horse riders to clean manure from bridges and tunnels twice per month. A hearty "THANKS" to our small crew of trail pooper-scoopers; it does look a lot better!

Our good friends at the DNR continue to make excellent progress on trail extension from Pine Point Park north to the City of Scandia. Several key easements and favorable landowner engagements were made late this summer. It will be many years before the new trail section is constructed, but the progress made by Brandon Helm had been nothing short of amazing.

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Association members and volunteers at the GBCTA first-ever South-End Survey day in September. From right: Bill Berger (Gateway Cycle), along with Beth Hayden and Joan Kahle-Berger



The GBCT Association table at the 20th anniversary Brown's Creek watershed event this summer. From right: Dennis Lindeke, Barb Wahman, John Baird, and Carolyn Baird.

President's Letter cont'd from Page 1

At the last GBCTA Board meeting, Nancy Stewart of the DNR provided several updates:

- The Highway 36/Hadley Ave. intersection will be reconstructed starting late summer or fall 2018. This includes a new grade-level tunnel for the Gateway Trail. Soon there will be no need to cross the road at this busy intersection.
- For trail users in the Mahtomedi/Grant area, new designated parking is planned in the athletic field parking lots of Wildwood Elementary School, north of Hwy 12 and just west of Jamaca Ave.
- We heard from trail users that the interim trail path on the west side of 35E near Arlington is confusing. The DNR intends to install better signage there. Discussions are underway for the new trail segment along 35E, between Arlington and Maryland. Many challenges need to be overcome, so stay tuned.

This newsletter comes out twice per year, but our website www.gatewaybrownscreektrail.org is always active, and lists current and upcoming events. Please visit often to see what your association is up to.

GBCT Association South End Survey Day 2017

Thanks to everyone who helped out at the first-ever "South End of the Trail" Survey Day on Saturday, September 23rd, in the parking lot at the intersection of Arlington Street and the Gateway (Arlington Gardens).

This is a more urban section of the trail, and the Association wanted to bring focus to it, and gather information from users in this area. Similar to the National Trails Day event in June, there were bike tune-ups courtesy of Gateway Cycle, trail information, refreshments, and plenty of friendly chatter with our trail users. About 20 people stopped by for a snack, to fill out surveys, and gave their opinions.

Respondents came from 7 different metro locations. Most generally used the trail weekly, for biking, walking or jogging. About half used the trail in the winter. The trail was rated in excellent or good condition about 66% of the time, with 33% of users saying it needed some repairs. There were several comments about absent or confusing trail markers on the west side of 35E, making it difficult to determine how to get to the Capital using the trail. Users also said they would like to see more art, events, and signage along this section.

We'd like to thank the DNR for clean-up prior to our event, and members who continued to pick up trash that day. The area was left spruced up and ready for the fall season! Special thanks to Beth Hayden for gathering and summarizing survey data.

by Liz Stejskal



Ever wonder what a bucket-full of bluebirds looks like? This photo of a full bluebird house (top has been removed) was taken near Wildwood Elementary School, Mahtomedi on 5 Aug 2017



GBCTA Association members chat with trail users at the South-End Survey Day in September. Foreground from left: Kim Weber, Barb Wahman, and Dennis Lindeke (back to the camera).

DNR UPDATE FALL-WINTER 2017

Candlelight Hike January 2018

The DNR will organize a winter candlelight hike on the Gateway Trail on the evening of Friday, January 26th from 5:00-8:00 pm. The walk begins at Wildwood Elementary School (near the intersection of the Trail and Jamaca Ave) and extends approximately 1 mile to the west. Check the Gateway State Trail webpage for details.

How to Report Trail Issues

If you encounter an issue such as a downed tree or other safety hazard while on the trail, please let us know so our crew can resolve it! The best way to reach us is through the DNR info center (see information below). Be sure to clearly state whether the issue is on the Gateway or Browns Creek Trail, identify the nearest major street intersection and, if you wish, request that the info be forwarded to the "Area 3B Trails Office".

Call Us: 651-296-6157 or 888-MINNDNR (646-6367) 8 am - 8 pm Monday-Friday, 9 am - 1 pm Saturday

Email Us: info.dnr@state.mn.us

Gateway Extension

The DNR continues to work with our partners the MN Parks and Trails Association, and communities in Washington County to identify opportunities to extend the Gateway from the current terminus at Pine Point Park on into Scandia. We have made exciting progress in 2017, and hope additional critical trail easements are on the books in 2018.

DNR Staffing Update

Rachel Hintzman will return to her post managing state trails in the Minneapolis/St. Paul metro area including the Gateway in January of 2018! Nancy Stewart, who temporarily filled this role for the last six months, will return to her position on the Public Water Access Program in the DNR Central Office. Nancy enjoyed working with the Association very much, thanks them for their leadership, and wishes them the best!

Brandon Helm, Minnesota DNR Parks and Trails Acquisition and Development Specialist

Not Quite Enough!



Association Board Member Peter Nord captured a dramatic photograph this summer along the Brown's Creek Trail just before the Highway 95 Bridge overpass. The driver of this (very) long trailer was attempting to get over a sharp incline where the trail crosses over the street. He managed to suspend his trailer at the very top of that incline. It took Stillwater Towing about an hour to elevate the back of the trailer to the point where the driver could begin to slowly and incrementally inch backwards.

He eventually freed his rig, and was able to continue his trip...by another route!

Fall Candlelight Event 2017

Liz Stejskal

On Sunday October 28th, the DNR held their first Fall Candlelight Hike on Brown's Creek Trail. If you recall, this was the day after our first appreciable snowfall. While cooler than normal, it was a treat to see colorful fall leaves on the trees highlighted by white snow on the ground.

The hike was about 3 miles, starting at the trail intersection near the Gasthaus restaurant, and proceeded on to Duluth Junction where there was a turn-around. There, the DNR set up a wonderful bonfire with welcome cider and hot chocolate.

To this walker, it seemed that quite a few folks participated. We chatted with a couple new to the Twin Cities. They recently moved here from southern CA, and had nothing but great things to say about the metro area and our fantastic trail system.

Many thanks to Nancy Stewart and the DNR staff who set up luminarias, attended to the fire, provided hot drinks, watched trail intersections, and cleaned up.

A fun first-time event. Let's do it again next year!



Vern Greene, DNR, watching out for pedestrian traffic at an intersection

Tids and Bits Along the Trail

Brown's Creek Watershed Event 2017

September 16th marked a twentieth anniversary celebration of the Brown's Creek Watershed District. This family-friendly event at Brown's Creek Park was well attended. It featured an introduction to area aquatic wildlife, flyfish casting lessons, fly tying, games, prizes, treats, and other activities.

This was one of many interesting events along the trail in 2017. We hope you had a chance to enjoy some of them, and look forward to many more such events in 2018.

What was lost is now found...well, really replaced

Sometime during late summer, all of the tools were stolen from the bike repair station at the intersection of the Gateway and Bruce Vento trails near English Street. For those who appreciate our MN trails and know what a great public resource they are, it can be frustrating to see this kind of disrespectful vandalism.

DNR staff removed the station, took it in for repair, and replaced it by early October. We want to thank them for their efforts. Please alert the DNR (email address: info.dnr@state.mn.us) to report anything amiss on the trail.

Thank you, the Gateway Brown's Creek Trail Association Board

Year-end Bluebird Update

by Dennis Lindeke

You have probably noticed bluebird houses along the Gateway Trail. Sixteen houses, starting near Wildwood School in Mahtomedi and ending at Pine Point Park, were installed four years ago. And what a successful bluebird trail it has been! A total of 188 little bluebirds have fledged, and hopefully started families of their own. Over this same time about 100 tree swallows have also hatched.

We install houses in pairs so bluebirds can use one house, and tree swallows can use the other. If there were only one house, tree swallows would claim it. They are aggressive, and chase the more timid bluebirds away. But both species tolerate sharing adjacent homes.

Most bluebird pairs will nest twice each summer, or on rare occasions three times with an early start in spring. Tree swallows nest once per summer.

Houses are checked weekly all spring and summer by volunteers from the St. Andrews Lutheran Church "Holy Rollers" biking group. If you see them on a Saturday morning checking the houses, stop for a chat. They will be happy to show you a nest and maybe some little baby birds.



A fledgling bluebird peeks out of a house along the trail

**Join us at the Gateway Brown's Creek Trail Association Annual Meeting,
Thursday 19th April 2018. See the website for more details.**

After breakfast, the team breaks up, going to the trail sections most in need of their expert help: The Manning Bridge, the Hwy 96 Bridge; and the Hwy 12 Tunnel. When the last poop has been scooped, and another arduous work day is done, they take their loaded buckets by bicycle back to Elmo the Elf's house for proper disposal in a dumpster he rents. It is no easy feat, biking while carrying five gallon buckets filled with manure on each handlebar, but these 4 skilled volunteers are up to the task.

Oh, Mr. Elf's neighbors may have complained once or twice for the constant buzzing of flies and the horse-like odors wafting out of the dumpster throughout the neighborhood. But this group knows their inconvenience is for a good cause!

We hope this tale of these 4 selfless volunteers will encourage others to give their services in the same fashion, and keep the GBCT trail the best in the state!

John Oldendorf

**GBCTA 2018 ANNUAL
CROSS-COUNTRY SKI EVENT
SATURDAY February 3rd, two starting locations**

The annual Gateway Browns Creek Trail Ski Event will be Saturday February 3rd. Lunch is at noon at the Gasthaus Bavarian Hunter restaurant located on 8390 Lofton Ave. N. in Stillwater. For those not skiing, the restaurant opens at noon. Lunch guests may order from the restaurant menu and are responsible for their individual tabs; pre-payment is not required.

You may ski to the Gasthaus from two locations:

- **Starting Site 1:** Meet at 10:00 AM at Bob Hagstrom's house, 8441 Kimbro Ave. N. in Grant, across from the Grant Town Hall.
- **Starting Site 2:** Meet at 10:00 AM at the Brown's Creek Park area on Neal Ave.

To help the restaurant know how many will be coming, please e-mail Peter Nord at dds nord@hotmail.com to say that you plan to come, and indicate which location you think you will start from. Please send your note to Peter on or before 29th January, so he can let the Gashaus know how many to expect. Hope to see you there!

For more information, contact Peter Nord at 651 430-2625, or visit our website at www.gatewaybrowns creektrail.org.



This Way to the Gateway

St. Paul installed new street / trail signs at Kellogg Blvd and at Sibley Street behind the Union Depot train station this year. The signs indicate the direction of the Gateway Trail to the west, and the route of the Gateway Trail as it runs along Jackson St to the north through downtown.

As the DNR continues to extend the trail, it is growing and changing in each direction. The website will keep you posted as new sections are developed!

2017 Gateway Brown's Creek Trail Association Board / Association Officers					
President	Dennis Lindeke		Treasurer	Pat Kuslich	
Vice President	Beth Hayden		Officer at Large	John Oldendorf	
Secretary	Joan Kahle-Berger				
Association Board of Directors					
John Kimberly, Greg Lindholm, Rob McKim, Pam Meyer, Peter Nord (Chair, Ski Event), Dan Parnell, Liz Stejskal (Newsletter Editor), Kim Weber, and Barb Wahman (Volunteer Liaison)					
Honorary Board Members and Trail Liaison					
Noreen Farrell, Bob Hagstrom, Doug Schwartz, Peter Seed, Vik Wilson, and Equestrian Liaison Judy Drew					
DNR Representatives					
DNR Parks and Trails Supervisor	Nancy Stewart	DNR Trail Naturalist	Linda Radimecky	DNR Acquisition/ Development Specialist	Brandon Helm

Return Address:
Gateway Brown's Creek Trail Association
P.O. Box 9295
North St. Paul, MN 55109



The Back Page

www.gatewaybrowns creektrail.org

UNSUNG HEROES ON THE TRAIL - a humorous account by John Oldendorf

There are 4 little-recognized GBCT Association members who have volunteered this year for some real-life hazardous duty...scooping the horse poop off the trail! These four are known as "The Nordic, The Tooth, The Spine Man, and The Elmo Elf" (not their real names, to protect them from bikers harboring "bike rage" or environmental purists who might disagree with their waste disposal methods). They were chosen for their special expertise, and attended scooping school, a five-day training camp in Aspen, Colorado. They attest the training was invaluable, and may prepare them for political office in the future, once their work on the trail is done.

A typical work day starts on a hot, stifling August morning for this courageous foursome. Each "suits up" at home in PPE - personal protection equipment; hip boots, raincoats, and face masks. Their tools are a variety of shovels, pitch-forks for the tough stuff, and specialized "Swifters" designed for horse trails.

To energize themselves for the arduous task coming they head out, embracing the cold, almost frigid August wind, to rendezvous at a local pancake house where the staff doesn't even blink at their HazMat outfits.

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An Unsung Hero

photo by J. Oldendorf