

Manitoba
Recreational

Trails Association

Newsletter

Summer 2007



President's letter – July 07

Dear Friends,

Summer is here and already speeding by! I hope that you are having a good chance to enjoy the many wonderful trails in Manitoba, and if you are a trail builder, that the weather has been kind to your building projects.

Some of you know me already, but I was elected President of the MRTA in April, after I was elected back to the Board at the March AGM (which unfortunately I had to miss). I am delighted to be involved again, especially right now when there are many exciting initiatives underway.

My first priority has been to work with the Board and others to develop a strategic plan. We have set an ambitious goal: complete the Trans-Canada Trail in Manitoba in 2010! Our strategic plan looks at general and specific ideas and tasks on how to accomplish this. It also provides details for the funding promised by the Premier last summer.

The strategic plan is your document and I encourage you to read and use it. It will be posted shortly on our website and Elisabeth and Ines can email or post you a copy. We have tried to keep it short and practical and we plan to update it regularly. Please check the information about your trail section and let us know when it needs updating. Stay tuned for more as we move towards implementing the ideas in the plan.

I would love to meet more of you, especially out on the trail. Since I love to hike and bike (and ski in the winter) I hope to get out to the parts of the TCT and our other recreational trails over the next many months. Please let Elisabeth know if there is something that you would like us to particularly see on your trail, or if you would like us to come out for a meeting.

Happy trails,
Ruth Marr

MRTA AGM & Conference – March 10 & 11, 2007

MRTA AGM was held at the beautiful Pinewood Lodge in Whiteshell Provincial Park. It is the one opportunity where trail groups from across the province have a chance to get together, meet each other and discuss common issues. With approximately 30 people in attendance, we were pleased to have representation from 13 of the 17 Trans Canada Trail (TCT) groups as well as a few from non-TCT groups.

The workshop sessions on the first day were intended to provide trail groups with some relevant information and insight as well as some fun.

Session #1: Navigating MRTA Grant applications



In 2006 the MRTA received a further \$500,000 from the Province of Manitoba to further the development of the Trans Canada Trail in Manitoba with an emphasis on Special projects. Elisabeth Ostrop from the Manitoba Recreational Trails Association provided an overview of the funding guidelines and the MRTA grant application process as well as some of the revisions and changes. Funding guidelines and grant application forms can be downloaded from the MRTA website under the trail builder link (www.mrta.mb.ca)

Session #2: Building Partnerships

Allen Chapman from the LaSalle Redboine Conservation District shared some of the highlights of the process and the partnerships that were forged to build the Cypress River Discovery Trail. By having different groups within the community come together they were able to build something that exceeded any individual group's abilities. Not only was a section of Trans Canada Trail built through a small wetland but they developed their own specific interpretive signage and wayside park for their community.

Session #3: Geocaching & Way-finding

Geocaching is a relatively new "sport" that is gaining popularity around the world and Geocachers represent a potential new form of trail user who enjoys using technology to go on a treasure hunt. Roger Giasson from the Manitoba Geocaching Association tried to demystify this activity by explaining the fundamentals of Geocaching, including how to build and register your own cache as well as giving us a bit of a hands-on experience.

Congratulations to Rod Noel and Hugh Skinner for being the first to find the hidden cache... what I want to know is did you use the GPS or track the footprints in the snow?



MRTA AGM

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The sessions were followed by the MRTA Annual General Meeting. Terry Howard, outgoing president of the MRTA gave the president's report, and Chris Randle presented the financial statements for the 2006 year.

Terry Howard (Blue Water), Lawrence Morris (Red River North), Glen Manning, and Charles Zant were re-elected to the board for another two year term. Ruth Marr rejoined the board after a one year absence, and Hugh Skinner from Crocus Trail was also elected to the board.

The evening was capped off with a banquet and a keynote address by Sanderson Layng, President of the TCT, who provided us with the National perspective on the Trans Canada Trail



Day 2 began with a review of the past year from MRTA as well as an update from the various committees. The highlight of the weekend for many came when the table was turned over to the various trail groups where each person gave an update on their individual trail section and shared their accomplishments and where some of their remaining challenges are. A full day could have been dedicated to further discussions of common issues and sharing of ideas.

The meeting closed with a lunch, followed by a short hike out to the proposed bridge site for the Whiteshell River Bridge.

Crow Wing Trail Strategic Planning Session

On Saturday April 21st friends and members of the Crow Wing Trail Association participated in a Strategic Planning Session held in the Campground office of the Roseau River Park in the R.M. of Franklin.

The purpose of this planning session was to determine "now that the Crow Wing Trail is officially open, what is our role and where should we be focusing our efforts". For planning purposes our time frame was determined to be 3 years in order to coincide with the opening of the entire TCT in 2010.

Due to current human resource limitations it was determined that programming - having events and getting people out on the trail- would need to be undertaken by partners of the CWTA. Work would be required by the CWTA to locate and develop such partners but the primary focus for the next three years was established as continued infrastructure development and promotion.

The following Goals set by the CWTA are as follows:

Access points

All access points to be identified and developed along the trail with amenities such as washrooms, garbage cans, benches and water. Where water and washroom facilities are not practical, the access point will identify where they can be found along the trail.

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Crow Wing Trail Strategic Planning Session

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Signage

Interpretive Signage: As there are very few interpretive signs along the longest section of the TCT in Manitoba, our goal is to develop interpretive signage to further enhance the educational experience of trail users.

- An Interpretive Plan Proposal needs to be prepared and distributed to potential sponsors:
 - Includes 7 community trail head signs with an overall map of the CWT and a map of the local area indicating significant sites as well as where the next trailhead is located.
 - Individual interpretive signs required along the route
- The three MRTA Tall Grass Prairie Trailhead signs need to be installed
- Development of Highway signage indicating TCT Communities and where the trail can be found.

Promotion

Promotional efforts will be focused on having our information available on the MRTA Website

- Development of local maps
- Development of the Crow Wing web pages
- Inclusion in marketing materials being undertaken by the MRTA and other partners.

Communication

Internal Communication - develop an internal communications strategy to enhance and further develop strong, functional local committees as well as the regional association.

External Communication - The goal is to create more awareness as to: who we are; where and what the CWT is. Three important subgroups were identified: local municipal governments, the public at large in our communities and potential partners.

Funding:

Capital Campaign Strategy: As everything suggested at the planning session involves money, Lynne Lemoine, the session facilitator, suggested a follow up workshop to develop a successful capital campaign strategy.

Outstanding Grants: Close out the outstanding MRTA grants by identifying work to be completed, undertaking such work and submitting the required reports.

Maintenance Plan

Our goal is that the Crow Wing Trail is to be completely maintained on an ongoing basis and a trail maintenance database be developed.

Local Projects

Kirkpatrick Swamp - Have funds in place and methodology addressed by 2010 to incorporate this area into the CWT.

Encourage local loops and spurs to connect to the CWT.

Optimum Route

The basic understanding in the development of the TCT was that the initial route would evolve over time to a more optimum route. In order to address this process the CWTA identified as a goal the development of the required tools so that this can be easily undertaken. Further work will be required as steps need to be identified and actions required to re-route the trail onto private property.

Quarterly timelines were identified in that the smaller tasks will be undertaken each quarter so that the ultimate goals are met by 2010.

International Trails Day Celebrations in Manitoba!



Submitted by Janice Lukes, Winnipeg Trails Coordinator

Minister of Healthy Living, Kerri Irvin Ross proclaimed the first Saturday in June as International Trails Day! Minister Ross attended the Henteleff Park Trails Tour and Tree Planting event on June 2nd and helped celebrate Manitoba's first International Trails Day. International Trails Day is celebrated the world over and is dedicated to the development, uses and the healthy lifestyle trails encourage.

Huge thanks to all groups who hosted events on trails in Winnipeg and Manitoba!

Bike to the Future,, P.A.W.S. - The Canine Friends of Assiniboine Forest, Naturalist Services Branch , Fort Whyte Alive, Friends of the Harte Trail, Prairie Pathfinders, www.OneGreenCity.com , Friends of The Forgotten Forest Trail

Picture: Yude Henteleff Q.C., Minister Kerry Irvin Ross proclaiming International Trails Day in Manitoba

The Borders to Beaches Project

The Border to Beaches Project is a trail completion initiative of the Manitoba Recreational Trails Association (MRTA) and the Trans Canada Trail (TCT). The goal is a fully built trail, winding 300 km from the rugged terrain of eastern Manitoba to the sun and sand of Lake Winnipeg's beaches. Volunteers have been fund-raising, building and maintaining remarkable individual segments of this route – the Borders to Beaches Project will link the completed sections and transform them into a Manitoba showcase.

The trail is a project that encourages healthy living, linking communities, education and supports the economy. Once complete the trail will not only be a great recreation asset for Manitoba it will be a an icon of the tourist industry

The project will focus on finding regional and site-specific solutions for trail building challenges. The project will be directed by the South Whiteshell, North Whiteshell, Centennial, Pinawa, Blue Water, and Red River North Trail Associations. Specific needs and opportunities will be identified in an Action Plan, with trail building beginning this summer. The project enhances existing MRTA funding programs by addressing barriers not necessarily included in the normal granting processes, such as finding solutions to specific construction problems, assisting in recruiting volunteers, etc.

Ultimately, the Border to Beaches Project is a pilot project, both for Manitoba and for the Trans Canada Trail across Canada. The approaches and solutions learnt in this project will assist other large segments of trail to be completed, realizing the dream of a national trail, from sea to sea to sea. Manitoba is proud to be a leader with this trail completion initiative.



MRTA Marketing Committee: Marketing Your Trail

Help us promote your trail. You know your trail better than anyone else, but you need to tell people all about it so they can experience it. Tell us so we can tell them!

Newsletter: Send us your local trail stories. Don't worry about your writing abilities as we now have a volunteer editor to assist us.

Website: A template to gather information for the web has been developed so that trail information can be easily accessed via the Internet. Funds have been budgeted for each regional trail association to have their customized page developed (similar to the Winnipeg Trails section of the MRTA website). If you don't have the template we can send it out to you.

Passport Program: In order to get trail users on the TCT we need to tell them about achievable segments. Break your trail down into achievable components. As long as information is provided (access point, km length, trail surface and identify whether the km's are in a loop or a drop off and pick up scenario), trail users can decide where they want to travel.

Interpretive Guides: Gold Medal, Award-winning Interpretive Guides and Maps are now available to trail groups at cost, \$2.96 with a retail price of \$4.95 – your association keeps the profits. You can order as many or as few as you want.

We cannot stress how important it is to communicate information about the TCT in Manitoba. Send pictures, articles, and comments to let us know how we can assist your trail association in promoting your section of the TCT.

Passport to Trail Adventures – 2007

The 2007 Passport to Trail Adventures is available through the Manitoba Recreational Trails Association office. The Prairie Pathfinders Walking club put together a list of family friendly hikes within Winnipeg. With input from various trail groups, we have been able to expand our list of family friendly hikes outside the city. From Roblin through Asessippi, Russell, Langford, Spruce Woods, Dead Horse Creek, St. Malo, Grand Beach, Pinawa and the Whiteshell and more - there are numerous places to explore. It's a great way of getting people to discover more of Manitoba.

The MRTA has contacted Recreation professionals, schools, Park offices and a few other venues in communities along the Trans Canada Trail and asked them if they would like to distribute passports. The requests have been coming in, and we are hoping they will be well received and used.

It is really quite easy to participate.

1. Pick up a passport.
2. Go on 5 hikes/walks/runs – anywhere, even if they are not on our list of recommended family friendly hikes.
3. Fill in the information. Include when you went, where you went and what you saw or did. Take a photo or draw a picture of something you saw along the way as a souvenir of your hike.
4. Have fun. Enjoy the outdoors!
5. Once you've completed 5 hikes, send in your passport to the MRTA, and we will stamp it for you (don't forget to include your return address). When we send it back to you, we will also include a certificate of completion and a free carabineer compass (while supplies last).

The passport program is a great way to promote trails and to get kids and their families out on trails, but. By collecting the data from the passports we can see where people are going, so this is why we would like people to send the passports back to us to be stamped.

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Passport to Trail Adventures – 2007

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If we've missed your favourite family friendly hike – send us the details. Include the distance (we recommend keeping a return trip under 5 km), where the start/end points are and how to get there. How easy or difficult is the terrain? Can someone use a stroller, wagon or wheelchair? Tell us a little about the trail and what makes it special or what someone might see along the way.

If you have an outlet that would be willing to distribute passports, please contact the MRTA and we will be happy to supply them.

Rock Lake Nature Trail Opens

Excerpts Courtesy of Southern Manitoba Review

A group of hikers and residents gathered at the top of the Rock Lake Beach road, at the southwest side of the lake, on July 17 for the official opening of the Rock Lake Nature Trail. Cornie Petkau and Brian Charles have been working on the trail for the past three years and it has been unofficially open for some time.

Penny Burton of the Roblin-Cartwright Community Development Corp. welcomed the group to the trail head. The trail now includes a meadow area which has been cleared out (maybe for a game of Frisbee), and picnic tables at the far end. There are, however no bathrooms, and no garbage cans – “so what you take in, you have to take out.” Phase 2 of the trail has begun, with the building of a bridge this spring and development of a short area beyond, which will be extended in the future.

The development of the Rock Lake Trail has been a labour of love for Cornie Petkau and Brian Charles who have volunteered incredible amounts of time and work along the way. The only funding received has been a small grant for signs, from the Cartwright & Area Foundation. The trail takes about a half-hour to walk and is definitely not boring. It starts with a deceptively easy stroll along the field above the lake but soon delves into the wooded slopes and becomes a little more challenging physically. Along the way, hikers, if they are quiet, may see deer, beaver, chipmunks and other animals, and will hear many varieties of birds. There are a couple of spots to sit at a picnic table and take a break. Many of the hikers attending the opening carried stout walking sticks, which help on the ups and downs.

The parking area for the trail is off to the right just near the start of descent on the road leading to Rock Lake Beach Store, so pack your mosquito spray and give it a try over the summer.



Left to Right: Brian Charles, MLA, Cliff Cullen and Penny Burton



Left to right: Brian Charles, Don Edkins, Cornie Petkau, & MLA, Cliff Cullen.

Trans Canada Trail Annual General Meeting

June 8- 10, 2007
North Vancouver, BC



This meeting provided an opportunity for all of the Provincial/Territorial trail organizations to get together, network and discuss trail issues and ideas. Participants were kept active as we explored North Vancouver's Trans Canada Trail by Foot and by Bike, meeting with various City officials and park managers along the way.

North Vancouver has one of the few themed TCT Pavilions. Specially commissioned totem poles were carved by a local Squawmish artist. They support the structure and welcome visitors to the pavilion.



The City of North Vancouver also designed special Trans Canada Trail street signage that would help keep walkers and cyclists following the correct route, along the City's streets and sidewalks. The neon green shows up better on the grey and rainy West Coast days.



TCT Annual Report



At our 2006 Annual General Meeting, our Trail partners identified a number of areas in which they would welcome the assistance of the Trans Canada Trail. These included improved communications, a revamping of our website, better and more resources for use by developing trail groups, assistance with funding and a resolution to the insurance issues that plague and sometimes cripple trail organizations.

I am pleased to say that we have made good progress in all these areas and that we are continuing in our efforts to provide the kinds of assistance required by our Trail partners in their efforts to complete their respective sections of the Trans Canada Trail.

Of particular note, I want to advise that we are currently in the process of hiring a full time Director of Communications as well as a full time Director of Fund Development. In addition to improvements that have already been made, our website is evolving with a new section for Kids and another for Maps to be introduced in September.

Perhaps most important, the Trans Canada Trail has developed a national approach to liability insurance which we believe will serve to bridge the time necessary to enact law reforms which will protect all those in the recreation and voluntary sectors.

Clearly, the number one issue that continues to require resolution by all Trail organizations throughout the country is sustainability. Day to day operations have to be resourced properly in order to produce the results we seek and there is no other single more debilitating obstacle to the creation of Trail than the will without the way.

The Trail recently contracted a fundraising consultant who compared our capacity with that of other organizations considered comparable although none has the daunting task we have accepted. It was immediately clear that organizations such as the Nature Conservancy, the David Suzuki Foundation, Ducks Unlimited and the World Wildlife Fund have both the level of funding and the infrastructure associated with success.

At the moment, we can't make that same claim - and neither can our provincial or territorial partners. Therefore, we are committed this year to ensuring that the Trans Canada Trail is fully funded to accomplish its mandate and to using all best efforts to ensuring that our partners enjoy that same status, for this task cannot be done without them. This is our number one priority and we look forward to reporting on our progress.

Sanderson Layng President and CEO

MRTA Celebrates the Completion of their Strategic Plan to 2010

On June 18, 2007 the board of the MRTA approved a resolution to accept the recently developed Strategic Plan to 2010. The MRTA has a clear goal that this plan addresses: to complete construction of the Trans Canada Trail (TCT) in Manitoba by 2010. In addition, the MRTA has a broader mandate to assist local associations to maximize their trail's potential. This celebratory meeting was hosted by Red River North Trail group in East St. Paul, where board members and RRN Trail group members went on a little hike along the local Trans Canada Trail. The brief rain shower did not dampen spirits as the sky was lit up by a beautiful rainbow – a sign of good things to come!

As of 2006, almost 70% of Manitoba's TCT has been developed, involving 17 regional trail associations and hundreds of volunteers. Trail development is supported by the Province of Manitoba, the Trans Canada Trail Foundation and individual donations.

To develop the Strategic Plan, the Board of the MRTA undertook several analyses:

- A comprehensive Status of the TCT to date. This is a work in progress, being built on data received from regional and local trail associations and based on the knowledge of the Board and the Executive Director. Some of the assessment needs to be verified and the budget estimates revised. It is intended to be a "working" document, and will be updated at least once annually, but also as needed, particularly when new information on trail completion or costs is obtained.
- Previous MRTA strategic plans and other documents were reviewed, identifying philosophies and priorities that were still relevant to 2010.
- Having understood what needs to be done, the status table was reviewed, looking for common elements across the province and to understand what the barriers might have been or will be to complete the T.C.T. This assessment looked at geographic and generic needs.
- Solutions were developed and reviewed, that would address the barriers and meet the policies and priorities. These are actions that MRTA can undertake to assist the local and regional trail associations, who have the responsibility to build and maintain the TCT. The Strategic Plan was developed by the Board of the MRTA to meet the objective of completion of the Trans Canada Trail in Manitoba by 2010. As such it will be reviewed and updated regularly.

The MRTA, in partnership with many dedicated, hardworking volunteers throughout the province, will use the Strategic Plan to 2010 as a foundation piece which will guide the organization towards the realization of the dream of completing the Trans Canada Trail in Manitoba by 2010.

Copies of the MRTA Strategic Plan will be available on our website under the Trail Builder link (<http://www.mrta.mb.ca/builders.html>).



L to R: Veronica Johnson (Red River North) Glen Basarowich, Al Johnson. Lawrence Morris (Reeve East St. Paul, MRTA director), Kurtiss Krasnesky (Red River North), Glen Manning (MRTA – director) Terry Howard (Blue Water, MRTA – past president), Hugh Skinner (Crocus Trail, MRTA – director), Harold Westdal (TCT- director), Kathleen Leathers (MRTA –director) David King (MRTA – secretary), Frank Penner (trail volunteer, Winnipeg) Centre front L to R: Linda Morn (Crow Wing Trail, MRTA – Vice president), Jacqueline Crone (Province of Manitoba), Ruth Marr (MRTA -President), Ron Schuler (MLA)

Trail Clean-Up Day in Sandy Lake- May 5th, 2007

Submitted by Doreen Stapleton

This was a joint effort sponsored by Rossburn Subdivision Trail Association, The R.M. of Harrison and Sandy Lake Communities In Bloom.

It was a soggy morning, but not cold, and the rain held off till after 11, so overall, not a bad time to be out!



Muriel Solonyczny (left), Reeve Anthony Kowalchuk (center), and Town Board Chair, Dorothy Maluk (right) with the Trail in the background. Shows how everyone had a great time!



Cathy Wroblewski, Linda Lewandowski, Judy Kowalchuk & Lil Kelunick at the Kiosk at the end of the morning

As one of the folks said, if it had been too nice out, everyone would have stayed home to work in their own yards!

Twelve Eager Beavers met at the Rails-To-Trails Kiosk and we spread out East and West of Sandy Lake to tackle the barrage of garbage that awaited us!

To anyone's recollection, an organized clean up had never been done before, so lots of "Treasures" were found!

Two truck loads of bagged garbage and assorted rubble was collected. The group cleaned six miles of Trail surrounding Sandy Lake and we all had fun doing it!

Communities In Bloom is now a recognized User Group of the Rossburn Subdivision Trail Association. One of their members, Cathy Wroblewski, was instrumental in the idea of cleaning the Trail to make it more welcoming for Tourist and Local use. An avid walker herself, Cathy calls the Trail her "Church" and loves to enjoy all the wonders it has to offer. Here are some of her words from a letter she wrote me on April 25/07:

" Everyone is becoming more interested in nature. I could spend entire days in spring watching numerous varieties of ducks and their behaviour.

Shorebirds - already I've seen one Great Blue Heron fishing every night at the culvert. I'm waiting for the Night Herons. I'd never seen one till we moved here. They are EXOTIC and the neatest things! I've heard a great horned owl hooting. Pretty soon I'll hear grouse drumming. Hawks are visible in a nest from the Trail and screech and at me and circle. I see muskrat, beaver, deer, mink and hares. Tracks of everything: weasel, fox, coyotes and lynx. Right now, to walk there in the evening is to be almost deafened with the various sounds. Loons! Already I've heard one. NOTHING is so wonderful!

They do nest and raise their young on Beaufort Lake and to see them so easily is a birder's paradise. Soon I'll see dozens of cormorants and maybe the pelicans will stay and nest this year. Last year, Sharon and I saw over a hundred floating together one evening. AWESOME! As for plant lovers, Stella and I are constantly notifying each other if we see something different. There is such a diversity here."

We plan to make the Clean-Up an annual event and hopefully adjoining communities will be enticed to join us!

About the MRTA

The Manitoba Recreational Trail Association (MRTA) is the official body overseeing the coordination of the building of the Trans Canada Trail in the province. The MRTA is governed by a volunteer board, currently consisting of thirteen people, including four regional representatives. It is a governing and overseeing body providing management and direction for trail development being undertaken by 17 regional trail associations, with a total of over 100 volunteers. The MRTA has one full time executive director and a 30 hr. per week office administrator/bookkeeper position. The Department of Culture, Heritage and Tourism has a Provincial Trails Consultant, who works closely with the MRTA.

The MRTA office is located in the Land Information Branch building, at 1007 Century Street, Winnipeg Manitoba.

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Manitoba

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Wanted

Trail Maintenance Information

The MRTA has engaged Hilderman Thomas Frank Cram to develop a Trail Maintenance Plan, to help you with your trail maintenance and refurbishment issues and guide the MRTA as to how it might distribute maintenance funding. Your input to this process is valuable. TCT trail groups were contacted by letter in May, with follow-up phone calls, faxes or emails in June and July.

Firstly, a **BIG** Thank-you to all those who have taken the time to respond and express your refurbishment and maintenance needs and challenges. It is important to report what is happening within your section of the trail so we understand your specific issues and conditions. This will greatly contribute to how we, the MRTA, function in the future with respect to ongoing maintenance and allocating funding.

If you still have not had the opportunity to put forward your specific information **please** contact Reese Cowan at Hilderman Thomas Frank Cram at 204-944-9907 or rcowan@htfc.mb.ca