

PRAIRIE TRAVELERS



Newsletter

Fall/Winter 2018

Dear friends,

20 years ago, a group of thirty advocates gathered in Rosemary Weber's living room with an ambitious goal – to turn an abandoned railroad corridor into a trail. The City of Wichita approached these visionaries with the opportunity, and provided technical support along the way. We banded together, applied for nonprofit status, and in 2002 received the deed to what eventually became the Prairie Sunset Trail.



In the 20 years that passed since that meeting, the Prairie Sunset Trail has gone from a dream to a well used, fifteen mile long trail with picnic areas, memorials, a covered bridge, and abundant flora and fauna. On any given day, you'll find runners, walkers, bicyclists, photographers, and amateur naturalists exploring the linear parkway. Our original dream has become a reality, and today we have a fantastic group of active members and volunteers who keep the trail clean and maintained, and dedicated supporters like you.

Our work is not done, however. In the coming year, we hope to relimestone the section from 263rd to 279th; work with the City of Wichita to pave the old Harry St connection to the Prairie Sunset Trail, parking areas, and maintenance contracts; install benches along the extension and new updated trailhead signs; begin work on a memorial garden around the statue of Cecile Kellenbarger in Goddard; work with KDOT to install signs on Kellogg for the Prairie Sunset Trail, recruit additional volunteers, including the "adopt a mile" program; and much more.

Prairie Travelers is a volunteer run organization. We need your help to keep this momentum going, and to raise the additional funds necessary to meet our goals this year and next. Donations can be made by check or online (through PayPal) at www.prairiesunsettrail.org.

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With gratitude,
Larry Hatfield, President
Ruth Holliday, Secretary

P.S. Does your employer offer matching contributions to nonprofits? Textron and many other local employers will match contributions to non profit organizations. Prairie Travelers is happy to assist in the process.

Fundraising Updates

Thankfully, this year's fundraisers were slightly more spread out! In May, Prairie Travelers and the Andover Augusta Rail Trail Initiative (AARTI) co-organized the second annual Oz Wicked Wind 100K. Despite the rain, about 250 people showed up for a challenging ride that lived up to its name. Ultimately, we were able to jointly raise \$7000 for trail development!

In September, the annual Walnut Valley Metric ride drew 225 riders to the rolling hills of Cowley County for a lovely fall ride with typical Kansas winds. This year's ride included a gravel option for the first time, which attracted over 50 riders. The new route was mapped out by Bobby Smith, who knows the local geography well, and included challenging sections and gorgeous views. We raised over \$6400 for the Prairie Sunset Trail thanks to your help.

For the 3rd year in a row, both Prairie Travelers and AARTI worked together to run the Silent Auction and Chicken Wing Contest at the Midwest Beerfest as a fundraiser for our respective trails. We raised \$3650

for each trail, which translates into ¼ mile of limestone for resurfacing the trail. This year it was held at the Kansas Star Casino near Mulvane.

These three events are the biggest fundraisers for our trail work. We are grateful for the many volunteers and participants who participated in the rides and the Beerfest, and for the tasty donations from Steve Richards at Blendrich Nutrition (both rides), Dillon's for the fruit provided at the WW100K, Sprouts for the bananas and oranges at the Walnut Valley Metric and Lawrence Photo donating and designing the plaques for the Midwest Wingfest Awards.



Mark your calendars for next year:

- May 19, 2019: Oz Wicked Wind 100K (start at Lake Afton)
- September 29, 2019: Walnut Valley Metric (start in Winfield)



20 Years of Trail Work

- 1998: First meeting with the Greenway Alliance
- 2001: CKR applies to abandon railroad line between McCormick and Garden Plain
- 2002: Applied for a non-profit status and granted soon after
- 2002: Deed granted for first 4 miles
- 2003: Deed granted for the second 4 miles
- 2007: Ribbon Cutting on the 1st mile in Garden Plain
- 2008: Ribbon Cutting for an additional 4 miles
- 2009: Goddard linear park opened with 80/20 TE grant
- 2009: Ribbon Cutting for additional 3 miles through Goddard
- 2012: Dedication of the Cecile Kellenbarger Memorial Covered Bridge
- 2013: Re-limestoned 2 of the original 8 miles
- 2015: Sunflower Matching Grant & 11 AmeriCorps NCCC volunteers here for 13 weeks
- 2016: Ribbon Cutting for Prairie Sunset Trail 7 mile extension, Cecile Kellenbarger memorial statue and Herb Bahm memorial bench
- 2018: Re-limestoned 5 of original 8 miles

Cowskin Creek Crossing planned

The existing bridge at the northwest end of Pawnee Prairie Park will be soon be available for bicycle use. To the west, it will connect to the Prairie Sunset Trail by concrete path along what used to be Harry St. To the east, Harry St and Seville will rejoin the Prairie Sunset Trail. A better path along the Cowskin basin is under consideration by the city that would connect the east side of the bridge to PST at the bank of the Cowskin.

A low water bridge plan for the trail has been approved by KDHE and the Army Corps of Engineers, but requires additional City funding. It's also possible that the Cowskin basin path might lead to a real bridge someday, which would be a win for everyone!

AARTI Update: Redbud Trail Ribbon Cutting during Andover Days a highlight of the weekend's events

Although a little chilly and cloudy, close to 50 volunteers, dignitaries and trail users gathered at the new trailhead in Andover to celebrate the extension of the Redbud Trail past Andover heading east from Prairie Creek to Kellogg just shy of 4 miles.

This was a combined project of the City of Andover, AARTI (Andover Augusta Rail Trail Initiative) and a matching grant from Sunflower Foundation and the help of AmeriCorps NCCC volunteers that helped make this a reality.



Unofficially open since spring, the usage has increased steadily throughout the summer with several hundred users counted in any given week.

Want more AARTI updates? Follow AARTI online:

- www.facebook.com/andoveraugusta.railtrailinitiative
- www.redbudtrail.org
- aartitrail@gmail.com

AARTI and Prairie Travelers work closely together to promote trails across the metropolitan area.

If you would like to donate (tax-deductible, non-profit) or volunteer, updates are posted on our FB or email at: aartitrail@gmail.com or mail to AARTI, PO Box 692, Andover, KS 67002

In Memorium

This year, memorials in honor of Frank Lander and Roger Kenney have been established to further outdoor recreation and promote healthy active lifestyles through the development of rails converted to trails.

Frank Lander, avid bicyclist and former Oz Bike Club wizard (1987), passed away in the spring of 2017. When he wasn't logging hours on his bicycle, he led and sagged the annual Firecracker 40, volunteered for many rides and helped with the annual Wicked Wind 100.

Roger Kenney, charter member of the Oz Bike Club (1973) and former wizard (1978), passed away this fall. He was very active with Bike Across Kansas and always had a camera (or two!) around his neck.

Upcoming events & meetings

Workdays: 2nd Sat. of the month

Meet at IHOP, 515 S Ridge Cir, Wichita
7:30 a.m. for breakfast
8:00 a.m. for work details

Meetings: 2nd Wed. of the month

Meet at 7:00 p.m. at Bite Me BBQ,
132 N St Francis St, just north of
Douglas in the Old Town area

Prairie Travelers Board of Directors:

Larry Hatfield, President
Ruth Holliday, Secretary
Paula Harms, Treasurer
Larry Debolt
Mike Doyle
Tony Flax
Matt Freund
Bob Lavelle
John Moore
Larry Zimmerman



We exist because of supporters like you: your donations and your volunteer labor. Please join us in making Kansas trails accessible to everyone. Use the enclosed membership form and envelope for a tax deductible contribution. We are a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization.

Contact Us

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The mission of Prairie Travelers is to develop, maintain and promote the Prairie Sunset Trail. Our vision is that the Prairie Sunset Trail connects neighbors and communities; promoting healthy, active lifestyles, stewardship of nature and appreciation of the region's history.



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prairietravelers*

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