

2023 ANNUAL REPORT

Gateway to Glacier Trails

Gateway to Glacier Trails develops and maintains a network of local trails in order to foster stewardship and connect communities to our open spaces.



DEAR READER,

On behalf of our Board and Program Coordinator, I'm happy to share with you our 2023 Annual Report. This year saw many more miles of trail development, plenty of volunteer work days, enormous generosity from our donors and business members and much more. Read on for both an overview of the year, and an insight into plans for the upcoming year.

With gratitude,



Jeremiah Martin

Board President, Gateway to Glacier Trails

MEET OUR STAFF AND BOARD



Amanda Minatra
Program Coordinator



Jeremiah Martin
President



Sam Kavanagh
Vice President



Keith Meehan
Secretary



Seth Schnebel
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Val Parsons
*Gateway to Glacier Trail
Committee Chair*



Sarah Dakin
*River Trail
Committee Chair*



Darin Fisher
*Cedar Flats
Committee Chair*



Gil Jordan
*Bad Rock Canyon
Exploratory
Committee Chair*



Tyler Tourville
Board member



Shayne Hatfield
Board member



Vernon Kiser
Board member

2023 PROJECT REPORTS

CEDAR FLATS TRAILS

The Cedar Flats Trails project involves the planned construction of 25 miles of non-motorized, multi-use trails north of Columbia Falls in partnership with the Flathead National Forest.



Pop-Up Events

- We hosted three pop-up events throughout the year at the 4th Avenue trailhead, and two at the Waving Bear trailhead.
- These events were designed to connect with trail users, answer questions, review maps, and more.

Work Days

- April 22: Earth Day work on Snowberry Trail
- June 3: National Trails Day work on TR04
- June 28: Work on Snowberry and TR04
- September 19: National Public Lands Day work on TR05
- September 24: Tree removal on TR05
- October 28: Signage installation
- November 18: TR02 root clipping, brushing and repair

194 hours

total volunteer time invested into Cedar Flats Trails during group work days.



Cedar Ridge Trail

- Construction began in July, with Terraflow Trails at the helm.
- The 2-mile point-to-point trail was completed in October.
- Trail construction was funded by a Trail Stewardship Program grant, Weyerhaeuser Giving Fund, our Forest Service Challenge Cost Share Agreement and our generous donors.



TR02

- Construction began in July, with Montana Made Trails as our contractor.
- The 2.3-mile trail will be finalized in the spring of 2024.
- TR02 will be an integral connection to TR04, Cedar Flats Road and existing trails.
- This trail is being funded by a Recreational Trails Program grant and donor funds.



4th Avenue Trailhead Development

- This fall our contractor, Kalispell Hauling and Excavating, began development on the 4th Avenue trailhead, grading and installing gravel.
- Development will continue in the spring with the installation of a two-panel kiosk and vault toilet.
- This trailhead development is generously funded by a Recreational Trails Program grant and donor support.



Waving Bear Connector

- This fall we contracted our friends at Flathead Area Mountain Bikers to complete a new trail that connects the motorized multi-use, Waving Bear Trail to the Cedar Ridge Trail. Previously there was a social trail here that was steep, eroded and potentially dangerous.
- This new trail was funded by 2023 Great Fish Community Challenge funds.

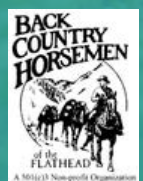
Signage Installation

- Also this fall we began the process of installing signage throughout the trail system, with maps now located at key trailheads.
- Directional signage and additional maps will be installed this fall and next spring.
- Signage was generously funded by a Flathead Electric Cooperative Roundup for Safety grant.



Partners

We are honored to work with the following partners as we construct Cedar Flats Trails:



TRAIL TALES



Jeff Von Kiper

"Honestly, I can't remember how I learned that Gateway to Glacier had planned on putting in a new trail system in what's now known as Cedar Flats. It could have been a mention in an email, or possible word of mouth. In any case, upon learning of the plan I looked deep into it. I would often visit the Forest Services project page, known then as the Crystal Cedar Project, to check on the progress being made. Being excited to see the project begin, time seemed to stand still as I had to endure the slow pace of the approval process which began way back in 2017. Being 56 at the time, I began to wonder if ground would even be broken while I was still able to ride a mountain bike...if ever.

Fast forward to April 3, 2022, when, for some inexplicable reason, I decided to go for a ride in the Waving Bear area, something I would rarely do. I had just started my ride from the 4th Ave. WN parking lot when a man, who was walking in my direction, said as I rode by him, check out the new trail I'm working on. I locked up the brakes and asked, has it started? Has the construction of the new trails begun? He said yes and told me I could locate the new trail just on the other side of the powerline road. I found it, I rode it, and have been riding it, and all the other wonderful new trails several times a week ever since. Cedar Flats is my go-to trail system now and I'm constantly up there riding. I even ski it in the winter. What was once an every weekend trip to ride elsewhere is now a ride spent locally on the great trail system in my backyard.

Kudos to all of the people who had the foresight to envision a riding area in Columbia Falls, to those who got this project off the ground, and to those who are seeing it to its completion. A big thanks to the Forest Service for providing the space to build this awesome network of trails. To everyone involved, thanks for adding one more piece to the puzzle that makes Columbia Falls an awesome place to live."

"I discovered the Cedar Flats Trails in 2022 when I moved to Meadow Lake in Columbia Falls. When a friend told me about the "powerline trails," I checked the Trailforks app to find out how to access the trails. Trailforks has been an excellent tool to help me explore the entire network of trails, while I am out there running or walking with my dog. I can run or walk from my house in Meadow Lake, to a little trail that starts from Oakmont Loop and takes me up to the powerline trail at Cedar Flats Road. This trail is marked "Amp" on the Trailforks app and is well-used by walkers, runners, bikers, and the occasional bear.

I walk or run the Cedar Flats trails several days per week and I love that I can access the trails on foot right from my front door. The trails are so peaceful and beautiful any time of day and all seasons, including excellent snowshoeing in the winter. Although I rarely see them, the bears use the trails too! Sometimes I feel a little nervous about setting out alone for a run, but once I'm out there, I love every moment. I'm sure to make lots of noise and I carry bear spray. While I enjoy being on the trails alone or with my dog, the trails are always better with friends. I'm so grateful for Gateway to Glacier Trails for building the Cedar Flats Trail system that's right outside my door!"



Lara Shortall

BAD ROCK CANYON WILDLIFE MANAGEMENT AREA TRAILS

The existing River Trail within the Bad Rock Canyon Wildlife Management Area (WMA) is just under 3 miles long. We are currently working with landowners Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks on plans to construct additional trails in 2024 stemming from the new parking area on HWY 2, as well as potential water crossings and turnpikes (pending Environmental Assessment and public comment).



Special thank you to landowners Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks



GATEWAY TO GLACIER TRAIL

Our flagship project, the Gateway to Glacier Trail has gained popularity with locals and visitors alike. This spring, we were awarded a generous \$7,500 Community Grant from the Whitefish Community Foundation to install signage along the trail. Thank you Trail Buddies, Montana Department of Transportation and Flathead County for your help in maintaining the trail.



Thank you to the volunteer Trail Buddies for investing 139 hours into maintaining the Gateway to Glacier Trail this year!



PINTS FOR PATHS

Our annual Pints for Paths brewfest fundraiser features over a dozen local and regional breweries, live music, food, silent auction items and family-friendly activities surrounded by beautiful scenery in West Glacier, Montana, right outside of Glacier National Park. All proceeds from the event go toward building and maintaining local trails in the Greater Glacier area! **In 2023 over \$7,500 was raised for local trails.**



THANK YOU

Thank you to our dedicated volunteers and donors! Because of your generosity, we have been able to build and maintain our trail systems, run our annual fundraiser, maintain a staff member and more!



LOOKING AHEAD

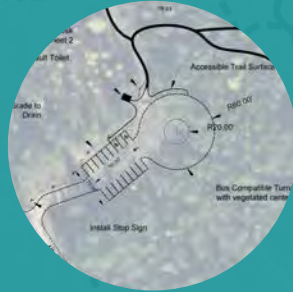
CEDAR FLATS TRAILS

Since October 2021, we've built and maintained almost 10 miles within the Cedar Flats Trail system, with plans to finalize Phase II construction in 2024 and focus on infrastructure development to support the existing trails.



Finalizing Phase II Construction

TR06 (.86 miles), TR02 (2.4 miles) and the TR01 cut across (.91 miles).



Finalizing 4th Avenue Trailhead Development

Finalizing the trailhead, adding a two-panel kiosk and vault toilet.



Cedar Ridge Trailhead Development

Beginning development on our main trailhead at Cedar Ridge Rd.



Additional Signage

Adding trailhead and directional signage.

BAD ROCK CANYON WILDLIFE MANAGEMENT AREA TRAILS

In 2024, pending Environmental Assessment and public comment, we anticipate working with Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks on the construction of additional trails as well as a bridge, water crossing and turnpikes within the Bad Rock Canyon Wildlife Management Area.



GATEWAY TO GLACIER TRAIL

In the spring and summer of 2024, pending approval and permitting by the Montana Department of Transportation and the County, we will be installing directional and informational signage along the Gateway to Glacier Trail. Thank you to the Whitefish Community Foundation for the generous \$7,500 Community Grant for this signage.



FINANCIAL REPORT



INCOME

Grants	\$80,148
Reimbursement Grants	\$30,032
Public Support	\$14,229
Event Income	\$12,276
Other (Interest, etc.)	\$3,168
Total	\$139,853

EXPENDITURES

Advertising & Marketing	\$2,288
Operations & Staff	\$42,508
Events & Outreach	\$8,381
Trail Building + Maintenance	\$77,959
Total	\$131,136

NET REVENUE

\$8,717



\$44,539

A special thank you to Whitefish Community Foundation, Circle of Giving and Great Fish Community Challenge donors. Because of you we raised a record amount for Cedar Flats Trails!

Trail Building and Maintenance - 59.4%

Advertising and Marketing - 1.7%

Operations and Staff - 32.4%

Events and Outreach - 6.4%



A FINAL NOTE

We'd like to take a moment to honor our outgoing Board members - Board President, Jeremiah Martin, and our Founder, Val Parsons.



Jeremiah Martin

Thank you to our outgoing President, Jeremiah Martin, for his consistent above-and-beyond work on behalf of Gateway to Glacier Trails. Jeremiah has been part of Cedar Flats since its inception, and an essential force in moving the project forward. He has been integral in more ways than we can say, and are tremendously grateful for his countless volunteer hours over the years and specifically as our leader and Board President. He plans to continue his involvement via the Cedar Flats Committee.



Val Parsons

Val Parsons is the founder of Gateway to Glacier Trails, incorporating our nonprofit in 2011 and staying involved since. Val was responsible for the Gateway to Glacier Trail fundraising, spearheading construction and overseeing the volunteer Trail Buddies who helped maintain the trail. She has been a force for local trails for almost three decades, and has freely shared her wisdom, time and resources throughout her service on the Gateway to Glacier Trails board. It's time for a well-deserved rest. We love you, Val!

Thank you for helping make 2023 a successful year of trail-building and maintenance! We look forward to continued progress in 2024.

We'll see you out there,

Jeremiah, Sam, Keith, Seth, Amanda, Val, Sarah, Darin, Gil, Tyler, Shayne and Vernon



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