

# Swedetown Trails Club

# HAPPENINGS

Winter 2020



## 2019-2020 Year In Review

Last season we received over 300 inches of snow. Swedetown Trails had a nice long season with grooming starting in November and continuing well into April. Because of the coronavirus shutdowns which started in

March, outdoor trails became more important to the community. With other types of recreation and fitness centers closed by state order, many people came to Swedetown to ski and snowshoe. We enjoyed nicely groomed trails well into April.



New trail features were a hit! Swedetown Trails Club widened Greenstone Loop and Valley Trail. The groomer was able to set side-by-side classic tracks which allowed skiing with a companion. Side-by-side tracks offered families or anyone helping a new skier be closer together. Another advantage to the extra set of tracks was that faster skiers could pass without either skier having to change their rhythm. We had many skiers express their delight at this change - "This is great!" was everyone's reaction.

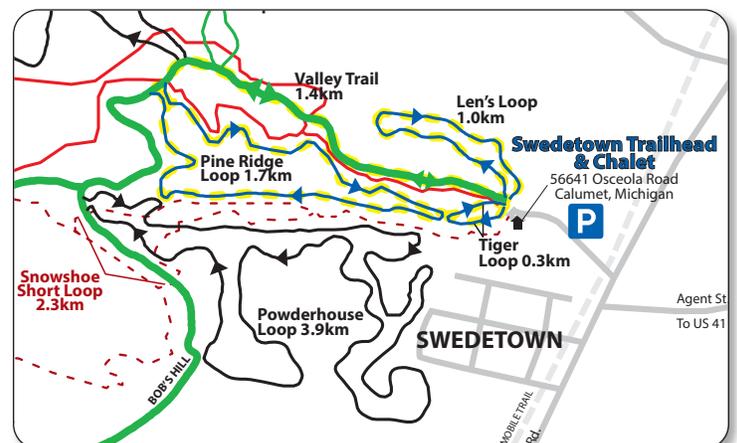
Another improvement to Valley Trail involved easing the slope at the beginning. With some fill and bulldozing, we were able to reduce the angle of the slope where skiers enter the trail system. New skiers were off to an easier start. When a Ski Tiger coach was asked if she noticed the improvement for the kids, the coach responded, "It's awesome." Everyone took to the change for another reason - it eased that final return to the trail head. The gentleness of the slope and the reduced need to herringbone helped decrease congestion at the entrance to Valley Trail.

## Ski New Trails at Swedetown

New for this year – new trails to try! Well, not entirely new, the improvements are simply different ways of connecting favorite segments. We have two unique trail names to introduce. There's a reconfigured short trail starting at the Chalet, called the Tiger Loop in homage to the local youth ski group, the Ski Tigers. The loop has typically been used by Tigers as a warmup loop. This intermediate loop is very short, about 0.3 km.

Also different is Pine Ridge Loop, an intermediate trail about 2 km in length. Pine Ridge Loop starts and ends from Valley Trail. It incorporates parts of the old Pine Loop and what is commonly called the Ridge Trail, hence the updated combo name! Pine Ridge is a lighted trail, open for evening skiing.

Powderhouse Loop remains an advanced trail, following many of its familiar hills and open terrain. The 3.9 km trail starts and ends at the intersection of Valley



and Greenstone. It incorporates the undulating hill portion of the former Pine loop as an uphill. The Powderhouse Loop retains many of the challenging aspects of the original Powderhouse trail and keeps its status as the most advanced trail at Swedetown.

Swedetown Trails Club endeavors to make improvements to the ski trails based on feedback from skiers and expert layout recommendations. The current improvements eliminate a confusing split point where the old Pine and Powderhouse used to start. The trail changes also get rid of five confusing intersections. This makes grooming easier with no backtracking needed, but most importantly, it makes the trails more logical to skiers.

## Skiing Through a Pandemic

The Swedetown Trails Club is excited for the upcoming season, even if we are in the middle of a pandemic, and people's lives are just not the same. Chalet use may be changing, but the quality and quantity of grooming will not! We encourage everyone to come out and enjoy the trails (in a safe, socially-distanced manner).

There are concerns about how people will cope and stay safe and healthy this winter, as the weather turns cold. Between COVID-19, isolation and the weather, winter will be a tough time for a lot of people this year, both physically and mentally. One way to deal with it is to get some outdoor exercise and to have some fun!

Medical experts say that outdoor exercise is much safer during the pandemic than indoor exercise at gyms, etc. Dry indoor air aids the spread of the coronavirus germs, and indoor spaces are more conducive to the spread.

### Healthquest.org says the following:

“Regular exercise is essential for everyone under normal circumstances. However, here are a few reasons why exercise is especially crucial during the COVID-19 pandemic:

- Exercise boosts the immune system: Research shows that regular, moderate-intensity exercise has immune-boosting benefits that may help your body fight off infections, including COVID-19.
- Exercise may prevent weight gain: Exercise can help you burn extra calories caused by dietary changes and offset the effects of sedentary activities.
- Exercise reduces stress and anxiety: Exercise is a proven mood-booster and can help adults reduce stress levels and build emotional resilience.
- Exercise improves sleep: There is evidence that suggests regular exercise helps you fall asleep faster

and improves sleep quality — and getting a good night's sleep has also been found to boost your immune system.

Exercise may be especially beneficial for older adults and people with chronic health conditions, such as diabetes, arthritis, or heart disease. Regular exercise can help to improve balance, flexibility, strength, mobility, and cardiovascular health. Plus, it can boost energy and overall well-being.”

Skiing, snowshoeing and snow biking are the perfect activities this winter! Social distancing, healthy exercise to keep your immune system strong, sunshine (okay, we can hope, can't we?), and camaraderie with friends can help us get through this difficult time. Don't forget a mask if you cannot maintain proper social distancing, and be sure to allow at least 6 feet when passing others on the trail.

Last spring, as COVID first hit the US and lockdowns began, we had never seen so many skiers on the trails so late in the season. People were getting out and enjoying what can be the best conditions of the season. The groomers worked hard right up until the very last bit of packable snow – thanks guys! – making it a spring to remember, and in a good way.

## Swedetown Chalet for this Winter

The lower level will be open for access to restrooms, changing room and drinking water. However, indoor

gatherings with groups will not be permitted based on recommendations at this time. The upper level lounge and concession area with the chalet host is going to be closed in December due to safety issues regarding close contact. The status of the Chalet may change if the health department makes changes to their recommendations in the coming months. We regret not being able to offer a welcoming social place this season, and we hope everyone understands. For this season, the focus will be on what everyone CAN enjoy - great trails and staying active in our beautiful winter area.



## Great Bear Chase

We expect to hold Great Bear Chase 2021 in March, but we are planning adjustments for the race. We will not be holding an indoor awards banquet this year. The race starts will be smaller waves and there will be only one aid station - racers need to plan to carry their own hydration.



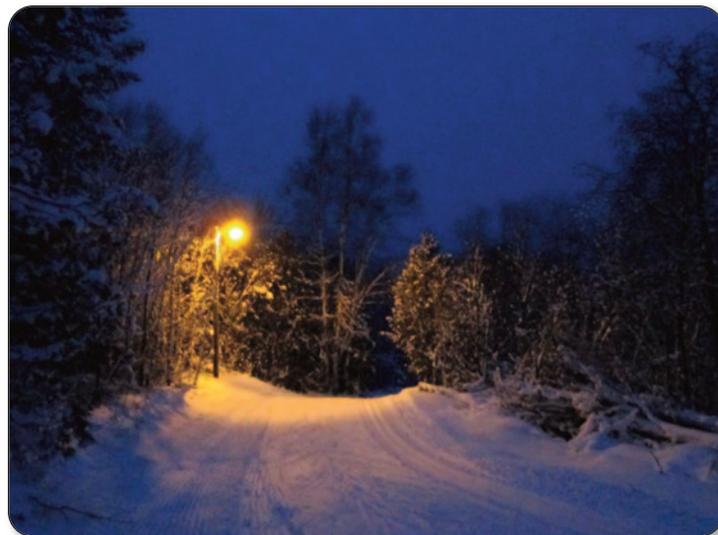
Over 800 participants enjoyed fantastic conditions and weather for the 2020 Great Bear Chase last March. It was a special anniversary year - the 40th year of the Great Bear Chase! Trail improvements on Powderhouse and Len's Loop gave the race an improved flow the athletes appreciated. Top skiers from the midwest competed. We had a Minneapolis family scoop up the top finishes in the skiathlon event - Caitlin Gregg was the top female skier and Brian Gregg was the top male skier. Top local finishers were Tres Green from Houghton and David Jaszczak from Hancock, both conquering the skiathlon in 2 hours and 38 minutes.

We thank the local community members for all of the ways they help. Whether it is representing our area with their skiing skills and endurance, volunteering at the race, or hosting and welcoming visiting racers, our locals make the event the "Great" Bear Chase.



## Swedetown Trail Lighting

Winter trail users who ski at Swedetown in the evenings know that we have several lighted trails available to make things more enjoyable. Lights are typically set to come on around sunset, and off at 8:00 pm.



Due to this year's routing changes on the ski trails, we will have the following lighted options:

- 1) Len's Loop received an upgrade a couple of years ago. It is lit entirely using highly-efficient 55w LED units, which are equivalent to 500w incandescent bulbs. There are no new changes to the lights on Len's.
- 2) Valley Trail has lights all the way from the beginning of the trail to the intersection with the new Pine Ridge Loop (formerly the kiss point between Valley and Powderhouse). Again, no new lighting changes there, except for two units that have LED replacements.
- 3) The new Pine Ridge Trail (see New Trails on page 1) has one light replaced and extensive branch trimming.
- 4) The short, new Tiger Loop is lit for those who enjoy hills!

The former Pine Lane downhill will no longer be lighted. That section of trail will now be part of Powderhouse, an unlit loop.

The short-term lighting plan is to replace all non-functioning sodium vapor lights with the high-efficiency LEDs. We have done this for the 2020/2021 season, and are purchasing some new units to have on hand as spares.

Longer term, we will gradually replace all of the old lights, add extra lighting to darker stretches, and generally improve the overall lighting of the trails as funds permit.

Come on out this winter and give them a try! For those who prefer skiing by moonlight, or choose to use a headlamp, there are still plenty of kilometers available to you.

## Support Swedetown Trails on Giving Tuesday

Any donations you make to Swedetown can be doubled this year as part of **#GivingTuesday!** During the 2020 Giving Tuesday initiative, Portage Health Foundation will match donations supporting Swedetown Trails Club. So if you are able to make a donation to support Swedetown Trails this year, December 1st is the time!

The STC plans to use some of the donations from Giving Tuesday for trail improvements and land acquisition (please see "Trust Fund Grant to Benefit Swedetown Recreation Area.") A 25% match of local funds is required for the grant to purchase the land on which some of the trails are located. Your contribution can ensure that those trails will be accessible for future generations.

STC will use some of the funds raised on Giving Tuesday toward purchase of a new, wider drag implement to replace an old one which has been welded back together too many times. The drag implement is towed by a grooming snowmobile and used for touching up trails when they receive heavy use. It is especially useful for running a longer season for skiers.

We thank everyone who donated during Giving Tuesday a year ago. We appreciate everyone's incredible generosity! Many of the changes you're reading about in this newsletter are the result of the funds from last year's Giving Tuesday – trail improvements, energy efficient replacement lights, longer season grooming, and surveying costs for the future DNR supported land acquisition!

PHF's reason for promoting Giving Tuesday by matching donation is to inspire people to collaborate in improving their local communities and to give back in impactful ways. For this year, the foundation is committing up to \$200,000 to match donations (in sum) to eighteen local nonprofit organizations. This is an opportunity for your money to mean twice as much, so we hope you will consider making a donation. The trails are supported by memberships. Giving Tuesday donations help keep fees affordable and allow STC to purchase equipment and supplies for making trail improvements and completing various projects.

Donate online on December 1st (or before) by choosing Giving Tuesday on PHFgive.org. Or use the mail-in form below, deadline for the matching program is December 1st. **Please ensure your check is made payable to Portage Health Foundation** and put Swedetown Trails Club on the memo line.



PHF will match community donations up to \$200,000

### Trail Conditions:

[www.keweenawtrails.org](http://www.keweenawtrails.org) • [www.swedetowntrails.org](http://www.swedetowntrails.org)

### Event Websites:

[www.GreatBearChase.org](http://www.GreatBearChase.org) • [www.GreatDeerChase.org](http://www.GreatDeerChase.org)

**Donate Online**  
at  
**PHFgive.org**

*Please indicate that your donation is for the Swedetown Trails Club*

### MAIL IN FORM

**YES!** I would like to support the Swedetown Trails!  
Portage Health Foundation will match donations to the Swedetown Trails Club postmarked before December 1, 2020  
Enclosed is my contribution of:

\$100     \$50     \$25     \$ \_\_\_\_\_

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

City/State/Zip \_\_\_\_\_

Email \_\_\_\_\_

Make checks payable to **"Portage Health Foundation"** and mail to:

**Portage Health Foundation • PO Box 299 • Hancock, MI 49930**

*The Portage Health Foundation & Swedetown Trails Club are 501(c)(3) non-profit corporations and contributions are tax-deductible*

## Swedetown Season Memberships Available

Swedetown season membership cost is \$120 for a family (two adults) and \$80 for an individual. Considering our long season and the quality of trails and grooming, this is a true bargain. We have not raised the rate in more than six years because our goal is to keep cross country skiing and other trail sports affordable for everyone in the community. Youth 18 and under receive free memberships, as always. Season and one-day memberships can be purchased at Cross Country Sports in Calumet. The Michigan Tech Ticket Office sells season memberships to Swedetown and other KTA trails, both in person at the SDC and online. Hancock Bike Shop and Downwind Sports in Houghton also sell season memberships to any KTA trails.

Calumet Township has set aside the Swedetown Recreation Area for outdoor recreation. As a partner with the Township, Swedetown Trails Club develops and maintains the summer and winter trails. Membership fees, donations, grants and our fundraisers, the Great Bear Chase and Great Deer Chase, are how we pay for grooming equipment, groomer operator wages, fuel, building utilities, insurance and trail improvements. Purchasing a membership ensures that grooming and trail improvements continue.

## Groomer Garage Addition

A 28' x 40' addition is being planned for the current garage that houses the Prinroth Husky groomer. The addition will allow the club to place our tractor and mini-excavator as well as all of the equipment currently used for building and maintaining trails in a new, secure, moisture-controlled space. We will also be able to store signs and to have a space to work on equipment when needed. The deteriorating white shed in the parking lot and the blue-gray garage up on the hill will be recycled. The addition to the groomer garage will help us keep the equipment in good shape and make it last longer. Removing the old parking lot shed will help make the chalet area look classier plus increase parking area.

A call for funds to help with the cost of the garage addition will be in the future. If you can set aside some funds to support this endeavor please do so now. Or better yet, participate in the Portage Health Foundation Giving Tuesday on December 1st and **double your donation** to Swedetown Trails Club projects. We will be securing bids over the winter and hope to proceed next summer. A dedicated fundraising campaign will be started sometime in the early spring of 2021.

## Trust Fund Grant to Benefit Swedetown Recreation Area

The Swedetown Trails Club is fortunate to have so much of the land our trails use dedicated to recreational use in perpetuity. Calumet Township purchased about 800 acres of the recreational area land with a Michigan Natural Resources Trust Fund (MNRTF) grant in 1997, and another 280 acres, including the Woodland Road Trailhead, with another MNRTF grant and a local family contribution in 2007. Land purchased with these grant funds must be set aside in perpetuity for recreational use. Knowing that our land base is secure motivates the club to plan and invest in the trails for the long term.

Calumet Township was again awarded a grant this past spring to purchase more of the land that the trails now use only by permission of the landowners. The club helped prepare the application and committed to raising the local matching funds that will be needed. The landowners are our most important partners in this project, sharing our desire to see their land permanently added to the Swedetown Recreation Area. Due diligence is under way and there are many steps to complete before land can be purchased. We are excited about this opportunity to work with Calumet Township to benefit the trail system and will share news as the project moves ahead.

## CARES Act Applies for 2020 Donations

Nonprofits are striving to continue to meet community needs heightened by the impact of COVID19. One of the provisions of the Coronavirus Aid, Relief and Economic Security (CARES) Act enacted in March 2020 is a new temporary incentive for donations supporting community organizations. The CARES act allows charitable deductions from pretax income, of up to \$300 for an individual or \$600 for a couple filing jointly. Even the ninety percent of taxpayers who do not itemize their taxes can take this new deduction from pre-tax income on top of their standard deduction, just for the 2020 tax year. Your deduction is essentially giving that money (up to \$300/\$600) to a non-profit rather than paying taxes on it. Example: Someone with a 25% tax rate donates \$100 from pretax income to a 501(c)(3) nonprofit. Their annual income is reduced by \$100. The person pays \$25 less taxes and has donated an actual amount of \$75 from their income while the nonprofit receives \$100. Check with your tax preparer or another reliable source to see if this CARES provision applies to your situation. If it does, why not take advantage and give a donation of more value to the organization you support?

# Summer Trails Update

## Great Deer Chase:

The Great Deer Chase was regrettably canceled for 2020 due to an inability to run it safely during the Covid-19 crisis. Plans for its return on the 21st of August 2021 are being developed. Details should be up in February 2021 on the [greatdeerchase.org](http://greatdeerchase.org) website. If you would like to become part of the team that puts on this race contact Marc, email [trailelf@charter.net](mailto:trailelf@charter.net). You will also be able to sign up as a volunteer on the [greatdeerchase.org](http://greatdeerchase.org) website.

## Trail Users Increase:

On a positive note, we have noticed a significant increase in bike trail riders this summer. The number of trail runners and hikers has seemed to increase as well.

## Donations Help:

Our many thanks to those of you who made contributions at the pay pipes or at the donation can at Cross Country sports. Your support helped offset the loss of income from cancelling the Great Deer Chase. Thanks to you, we have been able to pay all of our bills this summer season.

## Trail Elves:

Be sure to thank our crew of trail elves who worked to keep the trails in great shape. They were able to open the trails by Memorial weekend and had the trails in good condition this summer. Even after a couple of wind storms, the elves were able to get things fully open within a couple days.

We are always grateful for more elves to help with the trails. If you wish to join and help keep the trails in great shape subscribe

to the [trailelves@googlegroups.com](mailto:trailelves@googlegroups.com) list. Just send an email wishing to subscribe. You can adopt a trail or look for postings of trail clean up days and other work projects.

## Trail Projects:

This summer the Bull Toad loop was completed with the addition of a more advanced alternate line including two bridges on the West leg. If you're not up for the advanced section, you can take the split off to the Cedar Ski Trail and then rejoin the Bull Toad after this short section.

## Signs Updated:

The sign committee has been busy this year. You can see one sign project on US 41 and Agent Street where a new directional panel complete with activity icons replaced the old, brown Swedetown Trails sign. In addition, a new trailhead sign and map now designates the Spruce Street trailhead. It is the closest trailhead to the village of Calumet making single track access easier from the village. Riders enter onto the trail system on the Fawn Chase trail. The M203 trailhead also hosts a new sign and map. To help riders navigate more smoothly, new single track signs and maps guide riders at intersections. Next spring we plan to place maps at intersections of the sustainable double track to help those that prefer a more open or side by side riding experience to navigate those trails.

## Future Projects:

Thanks to the participants and supporters of the Great Deer Chase and the club, the Swedetown Trails Club has purchased a used John Deere 17d mini-excavator. We are in

the process of planning some trail repairs, upgrades and some new machine built, flow style trails (which will not have the name flow in them). We would love to add many miles of new trail, but the one thing that we need to help us be able to successfully add more new trails is more people to help keep our new and current trails in great shape. Please see "Trail Elves" above to volunteer so we can expand our riding experiences and offer more trails in the future. We are very happy with the mini-ex as it has already been used to improve both bike and ski trails. We are looking forward to its continued use on the trails.



## An Unusual Summer:

During this unusual spring and summer, Swedetown Trails Club Summer Use Committee members want to express our thanks to our volunteers and supporters who have helped us make the Swedetown trails a place where we could be outside and play. We appreciate Calumet Township's support of the trail network and are very glad to see more people enjoying the outdoor spaces. Hopefully, those who have been out using the trails will continue to do so for years to come. Thank you for a good summer season.

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